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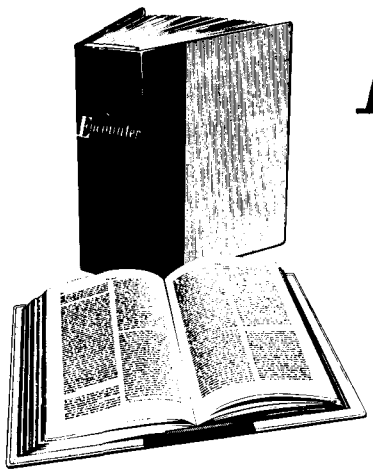

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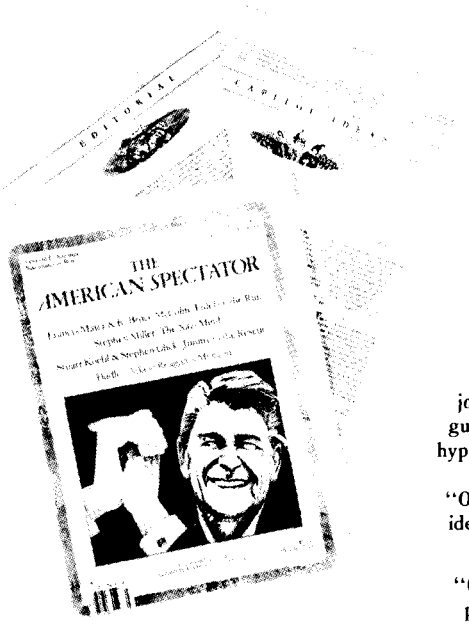

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Martin Elliott

Claire's Mails

"AT THIS TIME OF YEAR", I said to Claire, "the sun is slow to come up. Almost as slow as people coming downstairs for their recorded deliveries. . . . But it is worth it, do you not think, Claire?"

"Golly, yes."

We have this east window in the sorting office.

"All courtesy of the Post Office, Claire. Red sky at night, postmen are not looking. Red sky in the morning though, Claire, is a postman's warning. It will be raining by eleven, so keep your registered slips in an inside pocket."

Of course, Claire did not lift up her eyes to the dawn unnudged; and on her first morning I could not expect her to. She herself was hardly risen from the snug inside of her single bed. And the young man working beside her, whom she introduced as Frederick and who, I surmised from the way he was watching the curved, red box of her lips, was not just another young person employed by the GPO for the temporary purpose of Christmas, he looked tired too.

Both good-looking, Claire and Frederick, dimpling at each other and working side by side. . . . They had been up, probably for the first time in their lives, since about 0500 hours. They had been signed in, and given their armbands, and set to sorting.

Nice erks.

When I guided Claire to the canteen for breakfast (Frederick was being inducted by a postman other than myself) I did not find at all offensive the presence in my nostrils of her breath as she talked. How pleasant, indeed, after the exhalations of old postmen, my colleagues though they be, did I find her peppermint fragrance. Her complexion, I noticed, had the texture of best quality, white stationery. And a royal blue vein at her temple was as clear as if drawn by a finely-nibbed fountain pen.

Claire ate slices of brown bread with ham lolling in between that she had brought from home in a luncheon box. Had Claire prepared this, or Claire's mother? And was the bread homemade? I never asked, of course. I wished to save Claire the interrogation most other girls would have expected, and enjoyed, from old men like me. I took care, too, neither to champ my sausage nor to suck my tea. Why should the likes of Claire have to endure my manners? As for me, it was a treat just to sit across from Claire and observe her teeth accept, from time to time, the bread from her fingers.

"The moment has come, Claire, when I show you how to be accelerated."

Every year I have this sense of the Post Office as a mystery, medieval; my job being, masonically, to initiate my annual student. Claire followed me wonderingly to the yard where loading-aprons jut and where younger colleagues, their breath laid like sacks on the morning air, unloaded the last of the nightmail on to hooks.

"This yard is puncture park for bicycling postpersons, Claire, so I advise you to use the van. It will accelerate you and other casuals out to your walks when, in two or three days, you are on your own. Officially, Claire, I have to advise you, you are not allowed out on the street until eight o'clock. The pillarboxes must not be emptied until then, you see. . . . In practice, you will never be ready by eight in the Christmas rush. And casuals do not empty pillarboxes anyway."

Claire looked resentful, perhaps because of the cold. She was wearing what seemed to be a jiffy bag with the collar up; and a college scarf was wound several times around her neck. But her most precious part, the brain in her skull, she had left unhatted. Was this wise?

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THE WALK was up on Harrow Hill. We drove up there in my Datsun. It was still early, just light, early enough to ignore the commands of traffic lights; but, unlike many of my colleagues, I obeyed them. I desired not to risk troubling the Crown whose insignia in my lapel I do derive a certain pride from. I noticed that a London Transport driver was driving only himself in a bus lit up behind him like a lighted town. The Datsun was warm. "I could go to sleep. I could go *back* to sleep", said Claire.

Arrived on the Hill, I slowed momentarily for Claire to appraise the increasing view. Would Claire discern, as I do, something other than the flat deliquescence of the GLC into the administrative county of Hertfordshire? Would she feel the boss shape of the Hill heaping its influence upon her? Hereabouts, even in Before Christ times, they buried their dead. The Hill is alive with deceased Britons, Old and Middle English, Danes; their bones hold the gigantic barrow together like a skeletal system of internal scaffolding. An old church is still crumbling away up here, St Mary's, its flinty walls woad-blue, door barred, the whole edifice encroached upon by ancient vegetation.

Claire made a hole in her face by yawning and daintily concealed it with a hand. "O dear, is your car being whimsical on this wet morning, William?"

I accelerated up and I found my usual place and parked two wheels up on the York flags that are mossed and rough like the shell of a hundred-year-old tortoise and led Claire to my usual wall—"You rest the pouch on here while extracting your first bundle"—and instructed her about letter-boxes: how some cooperate by being at shoulder level, while others lurk away at your feet.

Claire acquitted herself well in Rosecroft Way. Otherwise I would not have allowed her to cover Rosecroft Walk, the cul-de-sac, by herself. It was she, too, who insisted on shouldering the pouch—"I have to get used to it, William." "I shall see you on the corner, then, in ten minutes, Claire."

Maple Crescent I did in no time, the absence of the pouch making me feel floatlike, bobbish, until I returned to the corner and found it still bereft of Claire. Had she absconded, as two of my students had in former years? Had she slid the envelopes through the grille of a drain and, as they say, hopped it?

When, therefore, I saw Claire lying her length on the cul-de-sac, her envelopes spilled around her like something in fragments, my regret was not only for her plight but for the way I had insulted her in my thoughts. I ran, as I had not run in thirty-five years, to her shape on the pavement. She had closed down her eyelids. A scarlet mitten with a white zigzag pattern lay attached to her wrist by elastic. She was on a hip and shoulder, her hair in a puddle. I managed to lift her weight—eight stones? I was never to ask, of course—and to set her on a low wall, albeit not with an appropriate tenderness. In fact, my collapse on top of her was what feathered her eyelids up. We lay for a moment, a moment that for me had a whole month of interest in it, Claire conscious though all but crushed, I marvelling at a dimly remembered mélange of feminine give and take, of softness and firmness, across my chest.

"William, are you all right?"

Claire's face had turned knuckle-ivory, as if tinged by the subcutaneous presence of her bone. I was looking, I thought, at an extreme anaemia. Her forehead was eggshell, brittle.

"The rule is, Claire, that I should report this incident."

"William, you're not to. They'll send me home. I won't get any money."

"Now, if I say you were with me all day. . . . So long as you are there to be signed out at four o'clock."

Having dropped Claire off, I took my daily brunchtime. This is my time for the relief of lowered arches, for the partaking of edible pies left out at home by my office-worker wife and for the pursuit of historical studies. For my job does not wholly define me. My occupation is not a coffin in which I lie, day in day out, until God parcels up my soul and I am delivered to the seat of judgment. My leisure is not merely boozed away. A good deal of it is spent with the several volumes of *The Decline & Fall of the Roman Empire* by Edward Gibbon, militiaman and gent. It is my acquaintance with a mind such as his that has mured me from most of my colleagues. I am not aloof—you cannot be aloof if five foot three and an endomorph. But apart, certainly. Of course, I realise that in comparison with undergraduates such as Claire and Frederick I am as naught. I know, too, from my reading and from my years as a World War Two volunteer that I am to be numbered among nature's footmen. I have always walked, in a figurative sense, while the captains and the

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majors, the Claires and the Fredericks, ride; I have always been the one to hold their doors. And I have accepted this station, turning it indeed into a stance. . . . I am careful to whom I reveal my self-improvement. . . . How commonly known is it that William Wordsworth, the great Lakeside poet, for whom I am named, was a stamp official in his time?

WHEN I RETURNED to the sorting office, Claire was at the pigeonholes. Her presence pleased me. My failure to report the morning's incident had been a dereliction of duty that had weighed upon me. Since Claire *was* back, she was probably returned to her health; but I enquired after it, all the same. She said she was feeling better, thank you; and certainly the ill look had receded from her face.

Sensibly, she was wearing a hat. She wanted, she declared, to do the walk by herself this afternoon—with me standing by. This, she maintained against my protest, was the only way of learning anything. At the moment, however, she was being frustrated by the slowness of her sorting; and she wished to know how long it would take her to learn the frame.

"Let me demonstrate, Claire, the speed and precision of my eye, my hand and of my memory that thirty-five years in the Post Office, yes, thirty-five, have developed."

Where is the originality of my job? Nowhere. On the other hand, there is a satisfaction in the doing of something other people cannot. Envelopes winged to their pigeonholes launched by my thumb and forefinger and by a wristy action. From the Antipodes, from the plains of Central Europe. . . .

"It is still possible, Claire", I said cautiously, "to get a feeling of romance about it all."

Up on the Hill Claire took the pouch and commenced the walk in all particulars as I had instructed. Pouch on the wall, the first bundle of post pulled out like a log, the elastic bands removed, the pouch swung back up. Then the rhythmical tracking, again and again, of a three-sided rectangle, from door to door. Footpath and pavement. Sometimes a garage drive. Bundle in the hand's heel, addresses toward you.

"Claire, I would not wrap the elastic bands around your wrist like that, it will impede the circulation."

Was I out of place to have spoken so? Surely not. My suggestion was the more apposite given Claire's thinness of blood—a result, I had decided, of inbreeding amongst Oxbridge families.

"I'm taking ages, William. You should go home."

"I could not do that."

"You'd have finished by now."

"We do not usually have an afternoon walk. Only at Christmas."

"There you are then. . . . I promise I shan't faint again."

A habit of obedience proved strong in me. I removed my inductive care. I went home.

Going home at this hour—later than usual, earlier than anticipated—affected me like the arrival at a holiday. Abroad has never featured in my itineraries but my bathroom might have been Folkestone's front the way I whistled as I removed my tie. We go to the seaside every year, the wife and I; and while the wife is happy to stay in her beach-chair I have always desired—no, needed—every hour or so to paddle. Sometimes the Channel has reached to my rolled-up trousers I have waded in so deep. Does saltwater cure arthritis? It certainly braces a postman's feet. Even beneath *my* low arches the sea sidles. And sometimes, if it is rough, it wolfs around my shanks. Having then retreated to the wife, I sit and feel my feet are chill and clean, as if strigilated by a score of teeth.

My feet, in fact, are the best of my parts. All my youth's slenderness is embalmed in them. Standing, of course, I can hardly see them for belly; but in the bath, as I lean back, I can put them up on the taps where they shine with wet as white as soap. Most of the rest of me is submerged and hidden, anyway, by the plastic tray that the bath wears like a bridge and that serves me as a lectern: most of my books have pages edged like waves from the effect of the steam. And then, in a warm overcoat of water, I can read while my body sends up its invisible sensations of pleasure.

But not this afternoon. The Christmas disarrangement of my routine I had become accustomed to through the years; it was this business of Claire that had made me restive. My watch that lay on the towel like a postmark said half past four. She would not have finished yet. She would be by herself in the dark sidestreets with their dim, old-fashioned lamps. When she came

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back to the main road she would be passed by boys from Harrow School in their whelk-mongers' summery straw hats. She would be looked at, and longed for, but they would not call after her, those monk-mannered, schooled young men.

AND NOW I WAS feeling guilt. I soaped and rinsed and clambered from the bath. In the glass my abdominal balconies confronted me. Never, since my body turned gross, had I disliked it so. Into a good suit I hastened—that is to say, sitting at the wife's dressing-table, my back to the mirror, I pulled my trousers on as far as my knees, then my socks and shoes, donning shirt and tie only when there was no further need to bend. All my suits of necessity are bespoke; and I have tapered trousers since the more conventional straights make me look, in profile, like a carton. In a doublebreasted jacket, my body covered, I reflect a comfortable image; indeed, sitting down, my lack of height extinguished, I look even aldermanic, my crinkly white hair being of assistance here: I am fortunate in a thick head of hair which a Cypriot barbers weekly and through which the wife on occasion will comb her nails as I sit watching television with my whisky. Now, as I brushed the hair, I did not mind looking in the mirror. Good evening, your Honour.

The road up to the summit of the Hill was clear and instead of parking on my usual crustacean flags I drove straight round the walk. But I met no Claire. She had finished, and was gone. She had left no envelopes protrusive from letterboxes; no packets signalled from a porch a resident's absence. Claire had left no trace of herself. And I felt desolate. My notion had been to drive her off the Hill and back to the sorting office for her signing-out: to do my duty and, at the same time, in the slowly-moving down-traffic to display myself at my best—I wanted to tell her of how, at her age, in the army I had always been the best turned-out on parade; of how Captain Cuthbertson, unasked, had chosen me to be his batman.

Instead, I coasted off the Hill in the stop-go file of cars, engine on for warmth, without a passenger, idling down to the Middlesex plain as in a menstrual flow. . . .

The wife, I remembered, had always been something of a bloater just before those particular periods in which she had felt inside her a monthly tug of the moon. Claire, it seemed, was a lady even in this: that despite a loss of blood even to fainting she had soldiered on.

"WILLIAM, do look at all this."

"Ah, it is beginning."

Claire had been on time next morning. She was straddling, the minx, her swing-out stool before the pigeonholes.

"It can't go on like this, can it?"

"It will get worse before it gets better. I have to tell you that."

"It's awful. . . . Isn't it, Freddy?"

Frederick grinned. Frederick was quietly cheerful and self-contained. With his curly hair and his foal profile, Frederick had the look of the great and famous London romantic poet, John Keats, albeit, at this early hour, as portrayed in the deathmask. He wore a silk scarf gypsy fashion; an overcoat descended to his ankles; he was shod in plimsolls not of the same pair. "Claire, what you can't do, don't. Isn't that right, William?"

"That is more or less correct."

Claire said, "Are you going to help me sort again, William? I *need* you."

"That is what I am here for."

We cleared the frame in two hours, a job usually of twenty minutes. While Claire pouched the bundles and put her padded jacket on over her commando-style pullover with its patches at shoulder and elbow—its skinnyrib style fashioned her wheatsheaf shape—I did my duty by briefly helping Frederick, whose postman had gone sick.

"See you about twelve, Freddikins", Claire said.

A pouch each, Claire and I divided the walk between us and finished quickly enough. Whether Claire achieved her noontime rendezvous with Frederick I did not know; but when I returned from my brunch they were both at their frames and already started on the afternoon's sort. Parcels were numerous, our pouches were full, so again we shared the walk and again we finished in a reasonable time.

"Heavens, look at the traffic, William. I shan't come back in the car, if you don't mind. I'll walk down. I'll be back *ages* before you."

That was the last of Claire's training walks. Henceforth, though she would be helped at the frame, she would be on her own outside. I, as

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usual, came back inside to assist the supervision of those casuals sorting only.

My duties this year were at a franking table with my colleague named Hazel and with a dozen or so youngsters who shared among themselves most of the marks of being polytechnic students as opposed to undergraduates: pimples, pores, the dissipation of their youth by too much lager and too little sleep. In other words, a lot of them belonged to what is called the working class—my class—inefficiently abluting, intent on not making the best of themselves, possessing nothing of that pedigree that emerged in Claire and even through Frederick's tramp persona. As they separated, appropriately, second class from first class mail, the sounds of electronic instruments crowded from their small mono radios. They were not being set a good example by most of my colleagues who, even at ten in the morning, facing the wall, drank Teacher's amongst themselves. Only Hazel and I maintained appearances, in our suits of subfusc grey, I in my white shirt and black tie, Hazel in a pink blouse with a V neck that looked like open legs. Hazel would not be taking her gins and orange until lunchtime and I drink on duty not at all. Hazel's eyes after lunch would turn sleepy, slow. Her trouser-seat gleamed like tar macadam in rain, less from sitting down (I fancied) than from her colleagues' black-patina'd fingertips—Hazel is the most *handled* of Her Majesty's female staff. Since I am among the few who over the years have omitted to iron their trouser-fronts against Hazel behind, and since we have in common a sartorial care, Hazel is courteous to my face, though at my back I am sure she mocks. Our charges were not disobedient and the days passed botherless.

Every morning I walked across to the east side of the sorting office and assisted Claire whose increased sorting capacity was offset by the enlarged volume of post.

The peak occurred on the fourth morning before Christmas. Claire walked to the van with two packed pouches, one at each hip.

And the next day the hills of post were noticeably lower.

"It is finishing, Claire. Santa Claus has mostly been."

"I don't know, they take the postmen off and they throw us poor little casuals in to take the load."

"But, Claire, I must do what I am told."

"William, I'm not getting at you. You've been sweet."

"I would have far preferred to be aiding you outside."

"William, stop worrying. I've coped."

In truth, I had been missing my outdoor exercise. From the centre of the sorting office in the afternoons I glimpsed the sky through the far east window as a blackbird's egg might have been glimpsed, as something remote, improbable, above a winter foliage of acorn-coloured parcels. No matter that cloud came and precipitated. Being shawled, the Hill loomed the more in my imaginings; particularly since Claire was up on it, circumambulating the now empty school, the churchyard cold and cakey with its tombstone decorations.

Did old bones stir up there at this season? Perhaps they ached, as with rheumatism, for forgotten fires and feasts?

At this time of Yule the old English foregathered. The Hill would have been dark, except for tiger tints where the fires were. Old King Log drew Everyman in, his children, animals and wife. Wassails at the meadhalls' doors. The lord and his lady, dispensing the meat and the bread. *Hlaford*, formerly *hlafweard*, loafkeeper. *Hlaefdige*, breadkneader, his wife. The smoke of their ovens would have been visible for miles at daylight. To the traveller in the tracks of the Middlesex forest it would have seemed the Hill housed gods. A station to lift the forehead to, as to an oracle. . . . Centuries later, the Hill's beacon announced the arrival in the Channel of the Spanish fleet. . . .

Thoughts in the sorting office, of a cold and cocoa afternoon.

FACIALLY, Claire was getting thinner. Not seeing her so much, I noticed. Her hands were like table forks as she deployed them, more quickly now, before the frame.

"Good morning, William. How do I feel? I feel tired. Look at my eyes. Freddy here says I've got used teabags under them. He's horrid, isn't he? Yes, Freddy, you are. Thank goodness there's only one more day to go. Then William will be able to relax too."

I am used to being teased. All the same, I felt a definite pang in the bowel after Claire had impaled me on the railing of her imminent departure.

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"The Hill", I managed, "will miss you."

"O, William, you look sad. It's Christmas."

The cloth of Claire's jeans was creased at the back of her knees as with laughter lines. But I knew, were I to crouch on the cold floor before her little feet in their miniature cabincruiser shoes, were I to embrace like a dog her legs, that Claire would not laugh at me, neither then above my crinkly white hairs, nor later behind my bowed old back. She was at risk, however, from no such behaviour. Knees that thrum with arthritis can hardly abase at a moment's notice. And even with Claire at one armpit, and Frederick at the other, and the whole Post Office willing them on, and with Hazel laughing at last in my face, to have risen after such a descent would have been impossible. Claire was secure.

Frederick came up to me at the franking-machine. After two weeks in the open his proboscis was purplish and he looked serious, ungrinning. His eyes, socketed towards the outer facets of his head—that foalish profile—did not meet mine. "William, I'd like to finish earlier today."

"One o'clock you will all be signed out, Frederick."

"I mean earlier than that. Look, William, I've got fully comprehensive insurance, you couldn't lend us your car, could you? The accelerator's not ready yet, and the buses back'll be packed."

I was franking, at a guess, two hundred envelopes every minute. "Yes, of course, Frederick."

"It won't be putting you out?"

"Here is the key, Frederick."

Claire had not asked what I was doing for the festival. And this gratified me. She numbered me not among those members of my class who brim with personal information at the merest finger of upper-class interest. And I, of course, did not enquire after Claire's arrangements. No doubt tonight, or even this afternoon, there would be medium dry sherries at her parents' house, or at friends'. Tomorrow, Christmas day, after a fortnight of five o'clock mornings, there would be a lie-in, then lunch. Would Claire drink a little too much? On the whole, no. I conjectured two glassfuls of white wine, after which Claire would cover her glass with one hand and yawn behind the other, and smile at Frederick, because Frederick would be there, his grins like the splits in the chipolatas that skirted the dished fowl. Turkey? Duck? A goose? Then, excused from washing up, Claire would opt for a walk, a stroll, with Frederick. Grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins of all degrees, these she would leave behind—except perhaps for a favourite uncle. A constitutional would be taken across, I hazard, Stanmore Common. The evidence of blood would appear in Claire's cheeks like mist. Would the favourite uncle, noticing the excess of her slenderness, insist on Claire's not walking too far? Would he assert, tactfully, that he himself was tiring and so ensure their early return? Because Frederick could not influence her. Frederick allowed her to do as she willed. If decorum allowed, I would purchase a present for Claire, a scarf of cashmere, slim as herself.

THE MORNING wore on. The franking-table was bare. Christmas Eve in the sorting office. The rush was over.

The postmen were in the canteen and the clubroom. Most were liquored up. Down here were only the supervisors of the outside casuals, and myself. The casuals began coming in from their last walks. Their empty pouches hung incongruously from their shoulders like dewlaps.

"Thank you very much for your assistance. Moneys due will be sent on. Happy Christmas. See you next year perhaps."

But there was as yet no Claire or Frederick. Two-thirty. My Datsun was not in the yard; and the names of C. Poynter-Smith and F. Jenkinson remained unticked on the roster. Their supervisor had rum on his breath. "Where have they got to? They'll end up in a pillarbox when I get my hands on 'em."

I explained the situation to him and he was glad to leave the roster in my hand and to go up to the party.

"You're barmy, William. He's had one too many. He's gone and crashed it."

At three o'clock several of my colleagues, progressing from the party to the street, shout among themselves and wave. Standing as I am in the middle of the empty sorting office I resemble, apparently, a pillar, a pillar of the GPO. I enforce a smile in reply to their jocularity and go out myself, past the cleaners, into the street. It is a damp and depressing afternoon. Last-minute shoppers stand like drizzle at the bus stops outside the station.

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Frederick appeared at three-thirty, his breath innocent of alcohol.

"I'm really very sorry, William, but you know how it is."

"No, Frederick, I do not know how it is."

"O come on. . . . It's Christmas. Sign Claire out too, will you? Make it one o'clock if you like. We're not trying to claim an extra two-and-a-half hours or anything like that."

"Claire is with you?"

"I dropped her off. Surely you can sign her out? She has things to do at home. . . . Merry Christmas, William. . . . William, I said I'm sorry."

"Power without responsibility", I muttered, without fully knowing why.

Frederick laughed. "What?" He was intoxicated on something other than drink. "Here are the keys, William. Sorry, can't stop."

WE NEED our gods.

Decades ago, I had the khaki Captain Cuthbertson. I buffed him and I hotspooned him and all but pared his toenails for him. Looking back, I realise he was ridiculous and largely of my own manufacture. And I suppose the Post Office has been my peace-time deity, exacting a tribute not always voluntary. It is a god that on my return to work on the 29th seems indifferent. The weather continues wet. Back on the walk the grass of the gardens is a decayed green. The houses seem empty, but my knockings bring to the doors housewives of a peeled-potato pallor.

The dogs are nervous. My gate noises send them wild. Their muzzles impede the mail I push through the letter-boxes and post it back to me. A child runs morosely back and forth, back and forth, across my steady advance past the churchyard. The elms and the oak-trees, to the heathen Saxons the word made wood, look as if violently upended, their boughs and branches roots. Their drip, drip, drip upon my envelopes dilutes the ballpoint addresses. I pass on, my feet flat, an ageing man bringing messages not his own. A god is served, a mostly underground god that, as the sun rises, pushes out a postman-paw.

Near Miss

They would call me soon. And still I stood
At some window on the cold side of the house,
Somewhere between this and non-existence,
Letting the evening rotate towards me,
Fixing my gaze on nothing at all.

All the life in the place had left suddenly,
And gone out to the terrace. But I stayed one
With the objects in this room, in their graveyard poise
Of dresser, bed, and vase. Everything seemed
Too dull to be worth a judgment, first or last,

And too dead to be raised by voices; it felt
Too late already. If they had sent up
From down below to fetch me, *Come on, we're waiting!*
They would have found only a shape you could not
Prise out from the furniture and the shadows.

—So I quite surprised myself when I started
Running easily down stairs, round corners, and out
Through a door into the sun. And can't explain
The laughter, the groans of welcome, the shuffling up,
Or my head and shoulders in the photograph.

Alan Brownjohn

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Jan Morris

European Sensations

A Journey to the Old Continent

Check Your Oil?

THE FARM DOG leapt from the gate and snapped enthusiastically at my hub caps. Somebody waved goodbye, teacup in hand, from the Parrys' front window. I met the postman in his van half-way up the lane, and through his window he passed me an electricity bill, a notice about next week's bring-and-buy sale at the village hall, and three chances to win £50,000 in a *Reader's Digest* Prize Draw. There was snow on the high summit of Moel Hebog, the hefty bald mountain in front of me; behind my back the Irish Sea lay still and silent beneath a cold and western sheen.

I was leaving on a European journey: from this far Welsh corner of the continent, looking across to Ireland, to Montenegro on the other side of it, looking down to Albania. I was about to cross, not just a geographical conglomeration, or a historical expression, but a civilisation: between these two extremes some 200 million people live, whether they admit it or not, to a common heritage and a more or less common set of values. This is the ghost of the Roman Empire, still perceptible after so many centuries of exorcism: if the Irish in the west never were subject to the Roman order, and have consequentially lived in tumultuous distemper ever since, the Albanians in the east have long since disowned the patrimony, and live in a state of chill and utter isolation, the only people on earth among whom all forms of religion are strictly prohibited.

The rest of us along the route, Welsh, English, French, Italian, Swiss, Yugoslav, are members really, for all our political styles, of the same spectral commonwealth. The great motorways which now criss-cross all Europe are only late successors to the high roads of the legions. The gradual weakening of nationality in Western Europe, the blurring of frontiers, the mixing of languages, even the universal acceptance of bank and credit cards, which means I could really travel from Caernarfon to Cetinje without a solid penny in my pocket—all these phenomena of the 1980s are only returns to the imperial conveniences of Rome.

So I hardly felt I was going abroad, when I hit the main Dolgellau road and headed for England and the south-east: for most Europeans nowadays abroad is somewhere else altogether—east of Suez, say, south of the Equator, Ireland or Albania. "Going far, then?" inquired the garage-man, when I stopped to fill up. "Montenegro", I said, but he was not in the least surprised. "Oh yes", he said. "The wife and I had a nice little holiday at Petrovac a year or two back. Check your oil, shall I?"

The Island Tilt

IT IS AS THOUGH the British Isles are tilted permanently to one corner—the south-east corner, bottom right, where London stands seething upon the Thames. Everything slithers and tumbles down there, all the talent, all the money, and when I got on to the *M4* motorway that morning I felt that I was being swept away helter-skelter, willy-nilly across the breadth of England. Around me all the energies of the place seemed to be heading in a single direction—the trucks from Cornwall and South Wales, the tourist buses, the ramshackle No Nuclear estate cars, the stream of expense-account Fords, their salesmen drivers tapping their steering-wheels to the rhythm of Radio 1. London! London! shouted the direction signs. London! screamed the blue and white train, streaking eastwards beside the road, and when

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I turned off to the south and made for Dover, still I felt the presence of the capital tugging away at me from the left, as it tugs the commuters from their mock-Tudor villas day after day from the far reaches of Surrey and pastoral Hampshire.

Mrs Thatcher's Britain is an uneasy kingdom, a kingdom of anomalies. It is poor but it is rich. It is weak but it is resilient. It is very clever in some ways, thick as mutton in others. It wins more Nobel Prizes per capita than any other nation, yet it can hardly keep its head above bankruptcy. It is socially at loggerheads with itself, but is united in a sentimental passion for the charade of monarchy. It claims to be the stablest of the Powers, yet it is fighting a civil war within its own political frontiers, over the water in Northern Ireland, and has just fought an imperial war in the South Atlantic. Even the sensations of a motorway drive like ours are muddled and puzzling, as we pass out of the poor wild mountains of Wales, where there are far more sheep than humans, so swiftly, in an hour or two, into the most thickly populated and intensely-developed landscape in Europe. The road is bumpy and often interrupted by desultory road works, there being not enough money to maintain it properly: yet beside it the lovely manor houses stand serene as ever in their old walled gardens, the villages cluster cosily around, the cows are plump, the meadowlands green and rich. The midday radio news speaks of more education cuts, rising unemployment, falling production, protest marches, civil servants' strikes: but all around us the cars of the indigent British, most of them imported, hasten eastwards at the statutory 70 mph on gasoline at £1.69 a gallon.

And the queerest anomaly of all is the condition of the south-east, the flatlands in fief to London, for there all the middle-class values, surviving everything that socialism has tried to do to them, complacently flourish through crisis and decline. By afternoon I was entering that cosy never-never land, and it was like entering an imaginary England, in an old movie or a rather dated novel. Glossy and mullion-windowed stood the commuter houses behind their privet hedges and ornamental gates, and there were boats on trailers beside their garages, and horse-boxes often, and girls in jodhpurs trundled about on ponies, talking in such well-enunciated voices that I could hear, or at least vividly imagine, snatches of their conversations through my open roof—"Absolutely super food. . .", "He's an absolute twit . . .", or "God, Jennifer, I do believe this bloody snaffle's breaking again. . . ."

BUSTLING AND AMPLE dormitory-towns stood all along my route, Haslemere and Guildford, Dorking and Leatherhead: ageless and comfortable towns, medieval merged with modern, chain super-market beside old family grocer, *Sew-'n-Knit* or *Pots & Things* cheek by jowl with *Edward H. Rigby, Ironmongers since 1767* —smug, fancy little towns with bulging car-parks and gilded municipal clocks, with pleasure-boats lined up for hire on willow-shaded streams, with well-built women wearing headscarves and pushing shopping-baskets on wheels, with Olde Englyshe Tea Rooms and grand half-timbered coaching-inns advertising Traditional Ales and Scampi-in-the-Basket.

No slums down here, no rotting factories, no lines of bitter unemployed. This is true Thatcher country. The rotten teeth of Britain are elsewhere: here are only the satisfied digestive juices. You will hear no raw or earthy dialects down here: this is the home of standard English, BBC English, and the accents of the countryside have long since been poshed up or homogenised—even the countryside itself, indeed, for though there are patches of fine green farmland between the towns, it never breaks away altogether from the urban pull, but is like some intermittent park or genteel garden, worked perhaps by commuters itself as a week-end recreation.

It is a pleasant and fortunate country, but it never chills the spine or raises the heart. It is Lotus Land Class II. But by tea-time anyway I had broken away from it into the open Kentish grasslands, and before it was dark I was running down the cliff-side road to Dover beneath its glowering castle, a town all bashed about by war and history, a town without illusions, not a Lotus-town at all, which inspects my passport with a sneer and shoves me unceremoniously, as if glad to get rid of me, on board a boat for France.

Kids at Sea

A BOAT for France! There is always a boat for France. Night and day for a thousand years or more, if you turn up at Dover you will

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find a boat for France. The English Channel here is the busiest waterway on earth, and in the high summer season there is a car-ferry out of Dover every ten minutes. Whenever I looked out of the *Free Enterprise*'s windows, as dusk fell over the sea, somewhere out there another ferry was stubbing its bows into the swell: and once I saw, a weird black shape half-hidden by flying spray, the whirring scudding passage of a hovercraft in the grey.

The car was clamped below decks, towered over by the mighty juggernaut trucks, German, Dutch, French, British, Italian, even Bulgarian or Rumanian, which are the colourful familiars of modern Europe. Upstairs the ship had apparently been hijacked by demoniac schoolchildren. They clustered in mobs around the Space Invaders machine. They stormed the souvenir shop. They experimented with foreign currencies in the coffee machine. They tripped up passing stewards. They shouted hilarious insults at each other. They lurched in screaming phalanxes up and down stairs.

Some were British, some French, some Italian, some Finnish for all I know, but physically they were indistinguishable. As we approached the French coast they were marshalled into some sort of discipline by pimpled bearded school-teachers, and I left them standing there waiting for the gangplank to go down in a condition of sullen suppression, interspersed now and then with giggles and belches. Their teachers surveyed them with distaste. A few elderly tourists stood warily around their flanks. The ship docked with a bit of a bump, and faintly above the roar of the starting engines, from far below on the car deck, I heard their eldritch shrieks.

Young France

YEARS AGO the scholar D. W. Brogan warned us that we were about to see a new marvel: a young France, which had not existed since the 19th century, before the double decimation of the two World Wars. Well, now we have it, and among all the countries of Western Europe, none has changed so fast or so dramatically as France.

The French police did not bother to inspect my passport, as I drove ashore at Calais. They are not in the mood for trivia these days. If individually the French are as pesky, as charming, as irreverent, as bloody-minded, as profoundly conservative as ever, corporately they have become forceful and rather flashy. The momentum of *Autoroute N1* towards Paris is twice as powerful as the movement of the *M4* towards London, and this is not only because the speed limit is higher, but because the drivers are more demanding, more exhibitionist and more opportunist, and because Paris is not just the capital of a State but the true hub of the Continent. If the energies of Britain slide down to London as though the country is tilted that way, the traffic from Belgium, Germany, Holland, Sweden even, presses down the *Autoroute* towards Paris with an eager expectancy.

Everything seems to be brand new on this steely thoroughfare. The road itself is newish, a product of France's own "Economic Miracle"; the cars are new, the signs are new, and every town we pass is clumped about by brand new concrete blocks, relentlessly French and functional. When I stop for a cup of coffee, all in the café is automated: the coffee churns from electronic urns, the rolls and croissants are stacked in their identical thousands, all is wink of control light and bleep of computerised till. France is young again! The middle-aged truck-driver standing beside me at the plastic-covered chairless table munches his hamburger with a faraway look, gazing out through the automatic doors as if he sees out there, away beyond the *Autoroute*, dim visions of soup tureens, checked table-cloths, and bombazine.

He is going to have to live, though, with the plastic table and the hamburger. They are the penalties of new youth. Instant food, nuclear power, missile submarines, the anglicisation of the French language—all these are part of the ambience of Young France, an ironic factor in that national greatness without which, De Gaulle the supreme traditionalist once said, France would never truly be France. And yet, and yet. . . .

By nightfall I was in Burgundy, eating snails, drinking Sauvignon de Saint Bries, and after dinner I walked out through the village to sniff the night air. The long main street was quiet and empty. Only occasionally did a truck roar through to Dijon, or a car spring away with a showy blare of exhausts from the *Café des Voyageurs* beside the crossroads. Chained dogs barked, one after the other as I passed, from behind high iron gates. Impertinently peering

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through window-chinks, I caught glimpses of polished brass, ornamental clocks, lace cushion-covers, lines of washing stretched beside fire-places, all illuminated by the flickering multi-coloured lights of the TV sets—over which, in every house, dim shawled and coated figures seemed to be silently crouching, very close to the screen. Though as I approached the café I could hear the cheerful sounds of rock, and though there were five or six Yamahas and Suzukis outside it, and a red Renault Turbo, still as I walked up the street beneath the pollarded limes I felt the old France still stirring all around me, embodied above all not in the sights, nor the sounds, nor the texture of the night, but in the *smells*.

Only slightly intoxicated by the wine, only minimally slowed down by the snails, only occasionally interrupted in my thought—*swoosh!*—by the passing of a truck, as I wandered up the street I identified those old fragrances one by one in my mind. There was the old masonry and woodwork of the village itself, of course. There was hay, and dung to go with it. There was the smell of mossy water, from the old fountain with the lion's head beside the bridge. There was that faint smell of good cooking which, even in the age of convenience foods, still hangs habitually about French homesteads. There was a hint of some evening blossom, lime perhaps, or honeysuckle. There was an emanation of wood fires, and a distinct soupçon of dry rot, and a hint of coffee, and something vinous or brandeine or Chartreusian underlying it all.

AT THE TOP of the street I found that the parish church had a large square porch jutting into the street, so I stepped inside, and from its shadows looked back through the trees down the length of the village. Inside that structure, I discovered, all the smells were permanently concentrated, jammed together in a sort of solid essence between the old pillars: food, dog, dung, hay, damp, stone, rot, blossom, fire and lichened water all in one. And so I leant against the wall there for a few minutes, relishing this heady elixir, watching the comings and goings from the *Café des Voyageurs*, whose lights spilt out across the village street, and whose juke-box beat with a lively thump through the barking of the dogs.

Transit Area

THE FRONTIER between France and Switzerland, in the outskirts of Geneva, is almost indistinguishable among the bland suburbs, but it is a special kind of frontier all the same. It is the frontier of detachment. It marks the line between a nation repeatedly ravaged, humiliated and ennobled by war, and a nation which has for generations resolutely, almost contemptuously stood aside from the internecine squabbles of Europe—between the grand epitome of the nations, in whose destinies we all seem to share, and a nation which holds itself aloof to the comradeships of suffering and pride. Even today Switzerland is a State apart, an enclave within the Europe of which it forms an essential crossroads, a member of no alliance, an adherent of no *bloc*, where unemployment scarcely exists, everyone is middle-class, and the rich of all nations come to live in bland tax-free alpine villas among the flowers, snows, and numbered bank accounts.

Something has gone wrong, though, in this milky paradise. I remember writing, not so long ago, that if ever I felt *relieved* to cross the border from France into Switzerland, I would know I was getting old—I would have come to prefer serenity to stimulation, calm to excitement. No such dénouement threatens now. Switzerland has lost its plush and easy motion, and Geneva, once so sure and dull, now seems above all restless, as though it is unsure of its own identity, and after all these years of complacency, is having second thoughts. It suggests to me one huge airport lounge, sleepless, dissatisfied, inhabited by world-weary duty-free concessionaires and slightly jet-lagged transients, coming and going night and day in a time-zone haze beside the lovely lake.

The Roller-Skaters

THE LAKE is always lovely. At night it is resplendent with its parade of neon signs, red and green and blue and yellow on buildings all around, stacked winking and blinking above the water against the misty background of the mountains. In the daylight it is spectacular with the great plume of its fountain, spouting a couple of hundred feet into the air above the harbour mole, and with the graceful coming and goings of all its boats, the veteran launches

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which potter back and forth from one city quarter to another, the elegant old steamers which, bowspritted and slant-funnelled, sail swanlike away in the morning mist for their beloved circuits of the lake.

But if the setting is still celestial—if the air is clear and clean—if the clouds sometimes part in the east to reveal the magnificence of Mont Blanc itself, attended by all its pinnacles—nevertheless there is a niggling, prodding sense of unease in the air of Geneva nowadays. "Shall we have a quiet weekend?" asked the *Tribune de Genève* nervously the day I arrived: for though they have not yet had youth riots here (as they have repeatedly in Zurich up the road), still there is an abrasive kind of fizz to the city now, harsh and humourless.

I lunched with a well-known spy of my acquaintance. What kind of a spy he is, who he spies for, or against, I have never been able to discover; but he has all the hallmarks of espionage about him, divides his time between Switzerland and the East, wears raincoats, and speaks Greek. We ate little grilled fish at the water's edge, as we generally do when I am passing through Geneva, and discussed the state of the city. Uncomfortable, he thought it, and getting more so. Security getting tougher, I surmised? Banks turning difficult? Opposition hotter? No no no, he said testily, nothing like that: only those damned *roller-skaters*.

Roller-skating is all the rage around the Lake of Geneva. Whole families skate along the promenade. Dogs ride about in rollered baskets, and youths whizz shatteringly here and there, scattering the crowds before them with blasts of the whistles that are held between their teeth. "Dear God, those whistles", said the spy, holding his hands over his ears, and indeed those harsh blasts struck me as a *leit-motif* or perhaps a *cri de coeur* of contemporary Geneva, at once aggressive and despairing, cynical and abusive. When after lunch that Sunday afternoon I wandered around the lake to watch the world go by I found that everything I saw, everything I heard down there, was punctuated by the shrill passage of the roller-skaters.

In particular I see their hurtling forms in my mind's eye when I recall a revivalist meeting I found in progress not far from the Pont du Mont Blanc, where the footpath curves around beneath the trees towards the eastern shore of the lake. This was a somewhat pathetic spectacle. A young man in a neat grey suit, holding a Bible, was preaching repentance on the sidewalk, backed by four earnest helpers with guitars, and around them there had assembled a characteristic Geneva Sunday crowd—people of every colour, every kind, black people, gowned Arabs, Chinese, a flamboyant covey of Nigerians, three mountain people like Sherpas or Bhutanis, one or two half-hearted local hecklers, half-a-dozen of those middle-aged, middle-class middling sort of men, widowers I expect, to be seen in any park of the Western world wandering aimlessly about on a Sunday afternoon.

It was a very subdued brand of fundamentalism that those zealots were offering, there in the city of Calvin himself. The preacher's voice was gentle, the guitars were muted, when they broke into a hymn it was remorseful rather than rousing, and even the hecklers hardly raised their voices. Behind them the lake shone happily, all flags, masts and fountain, and ever and again a dear old Edwardian motor-launch, so overloaded in the stern that her Cantonal flag sometimes trailed in the water, cruised back and forth from shore to shore like a prop on a circular stage.

The preacher preached, the hecklers mildly scoffed, the guitarists listlessly strummed, the motley crowd watched all in silence—and through them all in brutal counterpoint hurtled the roller-skaters of Geneva, behind them, before them, between the preacher and his audience, between the guitarists and me, heads down, whistles blowing, on their faces expressions not of fun, humour, fellowship or human sympathy, but of cheerless and unremitting arrogance.

The Tunnel

HIGH IN THE ROCK FACE above Chamonix, a huddle of brownish structures, a mesh of steel girdering, a great hole in the mountainside—the Mont Blanc Tunnel. The road winds heavily out of the Chamonix valley to reach it, and the effect is Wagnerian. The white massif looms operatically high above; the great trucks lumber around the horseshoe bends like so many giants; what dread enchantment, you may wonder, dwells within that hole, what fancy of Grimm or Tolkien, what Worm of the Alps?

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They tell me that when the tunnel was first opened migrating swallows used it to save themselves a flight over the mountains: and for people of the cold north, like me, it offers an almost symbolic transference to the warm south of our profoundest desires. No birds could fly through it now, for it is a tube heavy always with fumes and chemicals, but still as I climbed up to it that day I felt a bit like a swallow myself, genetically impelled towards the sun. The valley behind me, playing up to the allegory, was thick with grey mist, and the peaks above swirled with cloud: but at the other end of that noxious worm-hole, surely the sparkle awaited me.

And so, magically, it proved. The bare dank rock of the tunnel swept by me in the darkness, the illuminated signs kilometre by kilometre, the little sheltering alcoves with the emergency telephones, and presently far in the distance I saw a tiny circle of bright yellow light, hardly bigger than a pinhead. Like a bird I pursued it, and larger it grew, and brighter, and yellower, and presently it lost its outline, and came flooding into the tunnel to greet me, and dazzled me with its splendour—and it was the sunshine of Italy, on the warm side of the Alps!

I was there where the beakers brimmed. I had crossed the watershed of Europe, and had passed from the grey to the gold. Within the hour I was drifting poetically about on Lake Viverone, drinking martinis and observing the courting displays of the insatiably lusty crested grebe.

The Last Horse

THERE USED TO BE four golden stallions, loot from old Byzantium, gloriously above the great central doorway of the Basilica San Marco in Venice. For 800 years they stood there as the supreme symbol of Venetian independence and stability. When I walked into the Piazza San Marco, though, I found only one beast up there on the gallery, and he was hardly golden, but rather a sort of brown dunnish colour, and he had none of the scars and wrinkles of age upon him, none of the dents and roughenings, but seemed to stand there altogether too perfectly, too trim, neat and self-conscious.

What did I expect? demanded the man selling postcards beside the flagpoles below. That horse is a sham. The real ones have been removed to a museum chamber out of sight, and they are to be replaced by four copies: meticulous copies, lovingly made, exactly proportioned, but inevitably lacking the mysterious fire of genius, antiquity, or divinity. I asked the postcard man what he thought about it, and he said it was progress, that's all, progress, you couldn't stop it. But to my mind the appearance of the first of these poor substitutes upon that belvedere marks a fundamental turning point in the fortunes of Venice. At last pretence has definitively taken over from reality. The ancient metropolis, for more than a thousand years one of the Powers of Europe, has abandoned the long effort to maintain itself as a real, working city, and accepted its status as an exhibition place, a holiday town, a convention centre, where perfect sham horses make more sense than knocked-about old real ones, and age itself is something to be honoured in guidebooks and scholarly theses, but disguised or circumvented in life.

It is a relief to me. I have been protesting too long, hoping always that Venice would somehow recover her ancient greatness as a great mercantile or financial entrepôt, a channel between east and west, dreading the moment when she would be no more than a museum, petulantly scoffing at her restoration and from time to time declaring the wish that she would sink. Now, quite suddenly, I can scoff and argue no more. Venice has abandoned the old fight, thrown off the nostalgia and the melancholy, and is proceeding with gusto into the ordinary world. She has not been so lively since the fall of the Venetian Republic, nearly 200 years ago.

Often in the evenings I wandered, like everyone else, around the arcades of the Piazza, Napoleon's finest drawing-room in Europe, and wondered at the vivid, boisterous, almost violent new spirit of the place. The café orchestras string away still, of course, at *Rose Marie*, *Oklahoma*, or a contemporary favourite of theirs, *It's Up To You, New York, New York*. But they are rivalled nowadays by other sorts of music; transistor music from groups of students huddled upon the steps of the arcades, or cross-legged in circles upon the paving-stones; country music perhaps from a boy with a guitar at the foot of the campanile, with a huge crowd singing and swaying with him in the half-light; snatches of song from hilarious Italian schoolchildren, snatches of trumpet one evening from

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a man lurching tipsily round the corner of the Doge's Palace wearing a cocked hat and riding-breeches, snatches of cheerful whistle from me, for I rather enjoyed this vigorous new cacophony, and thought if you couldn't have the Four Golden Stallions of St Mark, you could do worse than turn the Piazza into a kind of disco.

It is not, though, just in the show of it that Venice has changed in the last year or two. More and more it is becoming a city of rich retreat, where tycoons of Turin or Milan may spend secure and sybaritic weekends, where pop stars and millionaires from all Europe may live it up with wild parties in romantic palaces. The Venetian working people are being forced out of the city, all too often, by rising prices, to turn themselves into mainlanders over the causeway in Mestre, where they may look back to the towers of their ancestral home with mingled relief and longing. The little neighbourhood shops are disappearing one by one. Carnival has returned to Venice, and for two weeks in Lent the city bursts into a communal festivity which may well again become, so social experts assure me, one of the great events of the European calendar. But it is a stage-managed festivity, sponsored by the tourist department, sibling to the *Biennale*, the Film Festival and the International Regatta of the Lagoons, and it springs not, I fear, from the numb or hollow heart of the place.

"Progress, that's all. . . ." Only here and there in the islands of the Venetian lagoon, still when the weather is right shrouded in a mysterious suggestiveness, are there pockets of resistance to the Newing of Venice. Not everybody wants the lagoon jazzed up with casinos, tourist complexes, love-nests or, as is seriously proposed for one island, "Caribbean-style Beach Complexes." I was told that on the island of Santa Fessola, for instance, two monks of the Dominican Order had dug themselves in to resist all change: so I hired a motor boat at once and sailed out there to meet them.

UNTIL RECENTLY Santa Fessola, in the still expanses of the southern lagoon, was an isolation hospital, and all its buildings still stand, slowly crumbling, half-overgrown by prickly creepers and flicked about by lizards. At first, when I disembarked upon this desolate shore I could find no sign of human life: only the dry grass crackled beneath my feet, and the old doors, sagging upon their rusty hinges, creaked theatrically when I pushed them. Just when I was about to give up, though, I heard a shout, and there were the two protestors, emerging from some hidden recess of the hospital and hastening down to the water-stage towards me. One was young and plump, the other old and white-bearded, and a little black dog scampered around them. They were cheerful men, but implacable. There among the toppling ruins they would stay, they said, come what may, to ensure that nothing dreadful happened to the island. Had they any notion what *might* happen to it? They raised their hands and eyes to heaven: *anything* might happen, they said, as though the Black Angel himself might be planning to develop the place.

Though the sun shone brightly and the breeze was warm, theirs seemed a melancholy dedication, so lonely the island, so decrepit those buildings, so far away the light and life of Venice. When I sailed away again, and looked back to the ugly white structures among the landing-stage, their plaster peeling and their roofs beginning to topple, in a round oriel window on the first floor I saw the weathered, wistful but still rosy face of the old brother, exactly framed in the window, as in a Renaissance portrait. He was looking fixedly out at me: when I waved he raised his old hand in tentative way, and from far out in the lagoon I could discern his presence there, peering motionless through that window.

"Enjoy Yourself"

IN THE BARE desiccated hills above Trieste stands the Yugoslav frontier post. I could see its lights up the road there, but it took me a good hour to reach them. Backed far down the highway to the city were the lines of Yugoslavs waiting to get home after the weekend. They had been to the great street-market of Trieste, most of them, to stock up with jeans, radios, coffee or perhaps gold; they had brought their children and mothers-in-law for the ride; now they sat there, engines throbbing, sometimes lurching a few feet forward, sometimes getting out of the car to stretch their arms, waiting helplessly in the gathering darkness to get home again to the Peoples' Republic. The hills were dark and empty all around us: when I looked behind I could see the lights of the

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waiting cars fender to fender all down the hill towards the sea.

The Yugoslavs were used to it. It is always like this. Half-way up the hill somebody had set up a mobile canteen, and they were selling coffee and hamburgers from the back of a truck. Occasionally some know-it-all, scudding up beside us on the gravel, plunged on to a dirt track up the side of the mountain, never to be seen again. Once a pair of gigantic trucks, from Mostar, the old Turkish town in Herzegovina, forced their way by sheer bulk and judder yard by yard up the waiting queue, blocking all other movement until, with a hissing of air-brakes and roar of engines, they disappeared triumphantly over the crest of the hill.

At last I reached the frontier post. The lights were dim. An official with a red star on his cap beckoned for my passport without a word and slowly examined every page. Without a smile, without a flicker, with only a gloomy stare he handed it back to me.

"Cheer up", I said.

"Enjoy yourself", he morosely replied, and waved me into the dusk.

The Virile Coast

AH WELL, Yugoslavia is like that. It hardly offers a laughing welcome to its guests, but there is scarcely a soul in the country who will not respond to a little jollying along, and whose native surliness cannot be softened, given time and practice, into bonhomie. I drove down the grand Adriatic Highway, winding between the high limestone escarpment and the island-speckled sea, in a state of elation, playing Mozart all the way, stopping now and then for grilled fish and *prosek*, inspecting a church here, a castle there, until I reached the old port of Split, Spalato to the Italians, and there settled down for a few days doing nothing on the waterfront.

I always feel happy on the Dalmatian coast of Yugoslavia. It suits me. I like its mean between simplicity and sophistication, between communism and capitalism, between the local and the national. I like to go into a supermarket and find it *moderately, temperately* stocked, without that vulgar profusion of choice which makes the modern Western store seem a little obscene to the traveller, without the boorish austerity of your whole-hog Soviet Grocer No 4. I like the sense of wry comradeship which, with an almost universal flashing of lights and comical gestures, warns you that there is a speed trap down the road. I like the ships which are always in sight, fishing boasts loitering among the green islets, tall white ferry-steamers chugging into port, tankers in dry docks up unexpected creeks, motor torpedo-boats in grey clusters at their moorings, hydrofoils flashing off for Venice—ships always and everywhere along that incomparable coast, pervading every image and crossing every vista.

It is the sexiest of coasts, the most virile, the lustiest. Bold are its men, brave its women, doggedly its children hold back their tears; Tito would be proud of them still. I stopped off one day to buy a bottle of black wine from a country homestead near Trogir, and wonderfully earthy and organic was the domestic hierarchy I discovered inside: a brawny stubbly farmer-husband, a tough buxom wife, a one-eyed cat, a sprightly terrier, and in a steamy scullery behind the kitchen, the Wine-Mother herself in the fullness of her years, stirring and tasting and stirring again—"Good health, good luck", cried these amiable bucolics as they filled my glass, and *bonk*, when I returned to the car I tripped on a stick, and drove back to Split dripping thick black country wine all over the hood, as though I had been baptised by gods of revelry.

Not that Split is exactly a frivolous place, any more than Yugoslavia is a frivolous kind of country. The city is built around the old imperial palace of Diocletian, a Split-born Roman Emperor, whose walls still form the outlines of the inner town, and this gives it a mighty imperial stance, with its wide harbour in front, its new concrete suburbs stretching away in heavy clusters to the hills behind. It is a city of terrific innuendo. Its citizens are magnificently stalwart—Split people must be the tallest in Europe, if not in the world—and the place hums with a sort of suppressed dynamism, as if it is always about to break into. . . .

Into what? Probably into nothing at all. All Europe is seized with a restlessness these days. It is muffled generally by prosperity and restrained by the Welfare State in its various guises—as Bismarck once observed, nothing maintains the *status quo* better than social security for all. In Yugoslavia, though, it is nearer the surface than it is in—well, in Dorking, say. The Yugoslavs are a people accus-

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tomed to living dangerously. In war they fought with insatiable savagery, in peace they have walked a political tightrope. They seem to me to be bursting with an energy only just controllable, like steam in a boiler.

Perhaps it is a consequence of their system—not quite tyrannical, not quite free. Perhaps it is a heritage of Balkanism, that fissiparous, conspiratorial instinct which kept this corner of Europe for so many generations in conflict and uncertainty. Or perhaps it is just the natural temperament of the people—Slavs of the Mediterranean, through whose history the warm and the cold winds paradoxically buffet, and in whose spirit the grim and the jolly seem so curiously allied.

SPLIT is a naval base, and when I was driving out of the town at the end of my stay I stopped at a traffic light near the naval headquarters. A very senior Yugoslav naval officer started to cross the road. He was loaded with badges, braid, and medal ribbons; but wearing as I was a floppy old canvas hat and a less than spotless blue shirt, just for fun I saluted him. His response was Split all over. First he faltered slightly in his steady tread. Then he smiled a little sheepishly. Then he brought his hand to the peak of his cap in a guarded and cautious way. And then, as the lights changed and I started forward, and he scuttled with rather less than an admiral's dignity to the safety of the opposite sidewalk, he turned around, all rank and propriety discarded, and shared my childish laughter.

The Last Ridge

"BACK AGAIN", said the magnifico at the café on the road into the Black Mountains, on the last ridge before Cetinje and the heart of Montenegro. We had met before, you see. He is always there, it seems summer or winter, like a major-domo of these uplands, or a Chief of Protocol. He wears black breeches, and a wide belt like a cummerbund, and he stands about seven feet tall, and speaks in a *basso profondo*, and tosses *slivovic* back like lime juice, and is in fact in all respects the very model of a modern Montenegrin.

With this splendid fellow at my side, kneading his moustaches, I sat down on the bench outside the café, and looked back, far down the corkscrew Kotor road, far up the glittering Dalmatian coast, along the way I had come. I had journeyed from one extremity to another, over the shifting and anxious face of Europe now—a Continent betwixt and between these days, a Continent out of gear perhaps, from rickety Britain with its fairy fantasies, young France, half *macho*, half poet-and-peasant, Switzerland of the fanatic roller-skaters, Italy of the sham horse and the real live monks, Yugoslavia with its lid tippling and clanking, like a kettle on the boil.

"Come far?" inquired the Montenegrin, lighting a short cigar. Over the ridge before us, wrapped in their Godless silence, stood the mountains of Albania.

The Whole Thing

The whole thing could be run backwards like a film.
Waking from a knowledge of total darkness, we could
Cry in a bed of conclusive pain that is all our own
And very slowly, we could unwind from every awfulness
To contract convalescence with sunny scythed flowers
And know that yes, today we will really get into our stride
Before assaulting the green hill up to childhood—

On which chancy summit the whole thing could come
To an abrupt end, like a Truffaut film, with us
Staring wide-eyed, smooth-cheeked—at nothing.

Freda Downie

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A BLIND MAN would recognise the scene. The regular, rhythmic crash, roll, and thirsty draining back of the pebbles as the waves break on the shore. The shrieks of children. The occasional BBC seagull. The smell of seaweed and *Ambre Solaire*. The loud carthorse trudge of families tramping close by along the shingle. The dry, salty heat beating up from the rocks.

The sun is almost blinding, a splintered explosion of brightness like a compass rose or the NATO symbol, drowning the rest of the sky in aquamarine. Dark glasses are poor protection: to dazzled eyes, the world looks flat and faded, a stage-setting in dry colours, the shadows mere paint. The mode is slow-motion, the focus a close-up: the book, the beach-towel, the basket, the discarded clothes. A split stone, a bone-white fragment of driftwood, an empty mussel-shell . . . *objets trouvés* mark out the territory. Existential inertia makes us heavy as lead.

The wind changes, the sky clouds, the cold sea-mist rolls in. But still it's M. Hulot's holiday as the beach begins to clear. Primary-coloured impedimenta are loaded into estate cars: beach balls, lilos, rubber dinghies, snorkels, flippers, aqualung canisters, sailboards, plastic buckets and spades. A few hardy souls still lie behind canvas windbreaks, spreadeagled like stripped corpses on some desert battlefield. The rest make for the town or the interior. On the sandy stone of the harbour wall, they drink warm tea or cold orangeade, lick soft ice-cream or candyfloss, eat hot-dogs or the burgers of Calais and points west. Inland, the pink and peeling sun-pilgrims explore abbeys and ancient earthworks, ending with steak and wine in a restaurant garden. All around, the folded green hills breathe peace and permanence. Farm animals settle. Owls, badgers, and foxes begin to roam the night.

HARDLY the vantage-point from which to follow the Falklands war. Cold, wet, exhausting, frightening, and bloody, it could hardly have contrasted more with the pursuits of early summer. Geographically, parts of World War II were equally remote: but then at least we were all in it together—bombed, rationed, conscripted. Even Viet Nam involved the draft. But this, for the British, was a conflict offstage, fought by professionals, like the Napoleonic Wars which so famously don't figure in Jane Austen's novels. Then, at least, there were Martello towers and fears of invasion by Boney. Now, when the misty sky resounded to jet engines, hardly anyone bothered to look up: there was no likely threat from Argy bombs. For civilians with no relatives in danger it was a spectator's war.

The spectacle aroused mixed feelings. On television, unlike Viet Nam, it was decorous—sound radio with lantern slides. We knew, of course, what lay behind the robot communiqués from the Ministry of Defence spokesman. No one who's seen the Battle of Worcester in Orson Welles's *Chimes at Midnight* can have many illusions about the realities of war. But the measured British tones were hypnotic. They ministered to a favourite self-image—firm, reasonable, calm in adversity, but resolute to the bitter end; the Scott of the Antarctic in us all. The correspondents with the task force seemed even better. Who'd have supposed that these modest if enterprising men would turn out to be so courageous? They didn't sound like the crack young-officer war correspondents of Alamein or the Normandy landings; several wore spectacles; none was simplistically gung-ho. But there they were, in the thick of things—and the natural response was admiration and fellow-feeling. We had to be on their side.

The reflex of loyalty was more obvious with the home-based defence correspondents. There was eagerness and urgency in their elucidation of weapon strengths and tactical options, however sober or sobering their words. And when it came to the headline writers of the popular press, loyalty turned into cheer-leading. THIS IS IT—THE FINAL PUNCH—WE'RE GOING IN. *We*? Not, surely, those stout Fleet Street men in shirt-sleeves and braces, subs with sub-machine-guns? No: as always in political discourse, "we" meant "they", if not "you." Yet the feeling was genuine, and general: with a few notable exceptions, some of them aired in a notorious BBC *Panorama* programme, the vast majority of the British people were determined to see the Argentines off the Falklands.

Their feelings included chauvinism. In Jane Austen's day, caricaturists lampooned a paedophagic Bonaparte, eater of children, monster in (virtually) human form. It was harder to see General Galtieri in that light—whatever the vices of his henchmen. The long pale face under its high peaked hat, registering steadfastness, looked like an aged Jean Gabin or Pierre Fresnay in some boring noble role. A ham actor? A figurehead, fronting the misdeeds of the Hoonta, Joonta, or Junta? Perhaps: but hard to hate. The same went

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for most of the Buenos Aires demonstrators—including the British woman, dark with venom and fear, about to renounce her nationality. Who would care to be such a hostage, with her home, her family, and her future all at stake?

The jumpabout crowds were something different. Hopping up and down on the spot chanting the name of their country as if they were Ovaltinies, they simply reinforced the stereotype of the excitable Latin or political marionette. Among them I twice seemed to see the same plump, grey-haired, bespectacled man, looking a little like a cross schoolmaster. Could he be, I wondered, a member of that rarely-sighted species, the professional agitator? He certainly seemed unlikely to shed his own blood for the Malvinas on which so many Argentine conscripts were dying.

As the British forces advanced, we heard stories of the Argies' bad behaviour—preparing napalm bombs, misusing the flag of truce, taking over Falklanders' houses, stealing woollens and smashing radio sets, going to bed in muddy boots, defecating on the floor. It sounded, frankly, a little *tiré par les cheveux*—an attempt to reify the enemy. Yet everyone acknowledged the courage of the Argentine pilots; and films of their training showed fine, solemn-looking young men with Indian, melon-shaped faces. No one in normal times would exult at "zapping", "taking out", or "knocking down" their planes. The only people whom I personally should have liked to take care of were the chauvinist Argentine teachers whose history of the islands began only in 1833; the Foreign Office officials in London who failed to come clean (or make up their minds) before 2 April 1982; and the senior officers in Buenos Aires who sent their men to burgle the Falklands and caused their Foreign Minister to earn the nickname of Costa Mendacious.

WHICH IS NOT to say that the Falklands War was unjust. Short of the "caudillo-seeking missile" recently proposed by Dr Alex Comfort as a means of clinical tyrannicide, there was no other way to remove the aggressor—no tough and friendly UN police force on the beat, no real hope of an embargo or effective sanctions, no possibility in those wintry seas, amid Exocet missiles, of starving the invaders out. Yet most of my intellectual friends kept saying that Britain had "over-reacted"—a phrase I first caught on the lips of Señor Costa M. They deplored the bloodshed. They feared escalation and Soviet involvement. They wondered whether 1,800 Falklanders, long dependent on Argentina yet clinging to a perhaps archaic view of Britain, should not have been asked to choose between Argentina and emigration. They are now asking how fences can be mended between the Western Allies and the Latin Americans, and whether Britain may not have created a second Israeli-type problem in the South Atlantic. Even a hard-bitten war correspondent, a veteran of Algeria and Viet Nam, remarked nervously over the line from Paris, when the task force set sail: "My God—we'd better win."

I understand these misgivings. Some of them I share. Before the Argentine invasion, it would no doubt have been wise to be clear and candid with both sides, instead of faffing around with diplomatic chat about "leaseback", "shared sovereignty", and the like. Either we kept the Falklands, and prepared to defend them and pick up the tab, or we didn't. We should have made up our minds, stated our position, and stuck to it. Instead, we footled. That was our mistake. The Argentines' error was the invasion—plus the prevarications they forced on Costa M. Once those decisions were taken, the die was cast. My own impression, as the contest continued, was that Britain had played her part with care, deliberation, firmness, and dash. Her aim was not to topple General Galtieri, to kill young servicemen, or to recapture sacred soil: it was to free the Falklanders from an invading army and to ensure, so far as possible, that international crime didn't pay. Risky? Of course it was. But "under-reacting" would have been still riskier. Lord Acton once remarked, of exculpatory historians, that "the weak man with the whitewash follows the strong man with the sword." Too much whitewash encouraged Hitler—rather as too much Foreign Office eyewash probably encouraged Galtieri. President Kennedy was careful to avoid either when he declared himself a citizen of Berlin.

SO what next? Even non-members of the whitewash brigade, such as *The Economist*, have been making much of the need for "magnanimity." If that means refraining from further offensive action beyond the liberation of the Falklands, it makes sense. In a made-for-TV movie, it would no doubt be exhilarating to see the SAS abseil into the Junta's headquarters and knock off the ugliest villains. In the movie, there would then be some kindly, white-haired, English-speaking democrat ready to take over and instil the principles of John Stuart Mill and Mary Poppins. In real life, we're still left with an aggrieved aggressor, misleading history books, an angry, unhappy people, and a new, still more poisonous myth. At the very least, we should avoid senseless provocation.

But "magnanimity" could cover a multitude of sell-outs. It could mean a return to the pseudo-solutions touted during the pre-invasion negotiations, or the weasel-worded procedural expedients batted to and fro before the British landings. None of these, surely, will wash. In the very long run,

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given a trustworthy government in Buenos Aires, a slow growth of confidence, a careful cultivation of common interests, it might be conceivable to take the heat out of the "sovereignty" issue, rather as the EEC tries to do in Europe. But the single example of Northern Ireland shows how difficult that secular process is. For the time being, we have to be less ambitious, and perhaps a little tougher.

I don't mean that we can return to the *status quo*. That has proved its impermanence. The islanders—and most sensible people—would of course like nothing better. Why shouldn't the Falklands return to their former peace and quiet, with two policemen, no crime, and a bracing way of life? Why should the wretched place be "developed"? Who wants tarmac, concrete, traffic, oil rigs, colour television, needless din, and sybaritic trivia? But the threat is real; and some of it's inescapable. The obvious fact is that from now on, unless the islands were to be handed over to the Argentines, they'll have to be garrisoned and defended—and that means tarmac, concrete, *et al.* It's hard to imagine a fortified conservation area, a National Park armed to the teeth.

So that dream must be jettisoned. But political dilemmas remain. Are the islands to stay British? are they to become self-governing? is that question to be decided by their inhabitants? If independence is chosen, who is to guarantee it? the United Nations? the United States? Europe? Commonwealth countries? Britain alone? What will the cost be? who is to meet it? What palliatives could be offered to Argentine pride?

Prophets at home have a poor reputation: at a distance of eight thousand miles they're often at a loss. Let me, notwithstanding, offer some suggestions. Almost every other columnist already has.

First, the islanders' wishes. Danger, death, and destruction concentrate the mind wonderfully. I doubt, therefore, whether many of the Falklanders would now wish to tighten their ties with Argentina. They may feel it safest to opt for remaining British, and might only seek independence if assured that Britain would remain resolute in their defence. But from Britain's point of view, independence would formally remove any last "colonialist" stigma—although "neo-colonialist" would be waiting in the wings. Marginally, then, independence might be preferable; but it's no great matter either way.

Secondly, guarantors. Britain would dearly like help with the burden; but it's hard to see much muscle coming from the UN. The United States, on recent showings, seems almost as unreliable as Costa M. The probable response to any British request might be a smidgen of economic aid, but no political commitment, for fear of fouling up the Latin-American connection. Europe, with Italy and Ireland already weedy on the subject, is unlikely to fall in behind France's firm leadership; and even Germany has large trading interests to conserve. In the Commonwealth, New Zealand under its present government seems helpful: but how long would that commitment last? My guess, or my fear, is that Britain may have to contemplate guaranteeing the Falklands by herself.

How she might do so is largely a military matter—and at that distance, on a permanent basis, a hard nut to crack. But the hardest questions are the last: how to afford such eternal long-range vigilance—and how to heal, ultimately, the breach with Argentina.

HERE, THEN, IS one suggestion. Give the islanders independence—but with a time-limit on Britain's unilateral guarantee. It could be fifty years. Within that time, stipulate that the islanders, with Britain, will seek to negotiate mutually beneficial treaties with Argentina on fishing rights, mineral exploration, shipping and refuelling arrangements, Antarctic exploration, and ultimately a joint guarantee for the islands. If, by the end of fifty years, satisfactory relations have not been established with Argentina, the British guarantee would continue for a further brief period, not exceeding fifteen years, and would cease at the end of that time. If by then the islanders were still insecure, those who wished would be offered resettlement. But Britain would not thereafter maintain more than a token force in the area as part of its general concern for the Antarctic region.

Meanwhile, build on West Falkland a powerful BBC transmitter to tell the truth to Latin America in Spanish and Portuguese.

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In Quest of Lamartine

A Poet in Politics—By RENEE WINEGARTEN

LAMARTINE has never exactly been forgotten—least of all by literary historians or by French politicians from the cultivated architect of the liberal Empire, Emile Ollivier, to the Socialist President, François Mitterrand. But it cannot be said that his reputation is still generally much alive. His name scarcely revives the wild enthusiasm aroused by his first volume of poems, *Méditations poétiques*, in 1820. A professed Stoic like Alfred de Vigny could weep over his colleague's harmonious poetry, while ladies yearned to resemble Lamartine's beloved Elvire (who was actually based on more than one inamorata). At 15 Flaubert would have given the entire learning of "windbags past, present and to come", for two lines of a poet who may now often seem excessively long-winded. By the time Flaubert came to write *Madame Bovary*, however, Lamartine's verses had sunk to being the favoured reading of the heroine who represented the romantic youthful self her creator wished to chastise.

By then, too, Lamartine's political star had set. The popular prints of 1848, which show him at his finest hour, hand on breast, as he stands on a chair to harangue the crowd, or as he rides through Paris acclaimed by the citizenry, have a faded, even rather absurd air. He was defeated; and history, which is not kind to failures of the moderate persuasion, was largely written by his opponents. Karl Marx, for instance, whose theories of class struggle supplanted Lamartine's hopes for class reconciliation and fusion, could remark with one breath that Lamartine represented "no particular class" and with another that he belonged with the bourgeois exploiters. On the other hand, the liberal-conservative political thinker, Alexis de Tocqueville, was to declare that the poet seemed ready to turn the world upside-down for the fun of it.

More recently, the historian Pieter Geyl could say of the author of the *Histoire des Girondins* that "As a politician . . . he only dealt in vague nobilities, in well-meaning generalities of a somewhat indeterminately democratic trend." A brief inquiry into the policies advocated by Lamartine during his most active years as a *député* from December 1833 onwards would soon convey a more positive impression. Besides, the "democratic" idea was then seen as daringly modern; and courage was needed to fight for it in a society that was becoming increasingly polarised. There was more to this ambitious, self-contradictory and questing figure than might at first appear. His evolution and his stance raise resonant questions for those who are reluctant to accept that the centre cannot hold.

ALPHONSE DE LAMARTINE was born into the minor Burgundian nobility at Mâcon on 21 October 1790, some two years after Byron. Like Byron, he was excited by storms, and like him, endowed with large sympathies. Byron fascinated him. Lamartine's poem, *L'Homme*, addressed to Lord Byron, where he called the creator of Manfred a singer of hell, considerably irritated the dedicatee, who thought it a "pretty title to give a man for doubting if there be any such place!" When Lamartine was serving as a diplomat in Florence in the years immediately after Byron's death at Missolonghi, he did not fail to discuss the hero of Greek Independence with those Byronian Boswells, Captain Medwin and Lady Blessington. To a friend, Lamartine was to observe in middle age:

> "I am reading Byron's memoirs with delight. . . . I also discover myself in him before the grain of mustard seed of the Gospel had sprouted within me: the same wildness of passion and spirit minus the genius. I would still have had more or less the same dose if I had struggled less against myself. . . . But I pity the man even as I admire him. He never tried to control himself, he is weak: any man is weak who never subdues himself, even though he may subdue the whole world!"[1]

That contempt for self-indulgence and stress on

[1] Lamartine, Letter to Aimé Martin, 15 January 1831, *Correspondance générale* (ed. Levaillant, 1943), vol. I, pp. 104–5.

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will-power provide a valuable key to the moulding of Lamartine's character.

POETRY MIGHT OFFER the occasion for expansive self-revelation and spiritual yearnings but this death-haunted poet, whose favourite bedside book was Voltaire's letters, also retained a keen awareness of himself as a rational being. Many years later, Charles Dickens, meeting Lamartine in Paris (he had earlier become acquainted with the poet in Genoa), found him "highly prepossessing, and with a sort of calm passion about him, very taking indeed." Lamartine himself had noted a kind of dualism within: at the same time as he spoke ardently and impetuously, he was also "the calm, unexcited critic"—it was as if an impartial voice could be heard behind the passionate words (as he told the English economist, Nassau William Senior). A French contemporary was struck by a certain elusiveness as well as self-control: "Beneath his easy-going and effusive air, he was very secretive, very much in command of himself, and kept within his innermost being hidden recesses where none penetrated, not even himself, perhaps...." It would be too facile to think of Lamartine as facile.

Even as a young man, Lamartine had not intended to devote himself solely to poetry. He thirsted for the active life. Byron came to embody in his eyes the union of thought and action. What was the good of being the leading poet in the land, if one did not become its leading man of action? inquired Lamartine. There was no incompatibility between thought and action, the latter being the former's offspring. In his view, both were needful to make the full man. This notion was controversial at the time. If Victor Hugo then somewhat cautiously proposed that poets could rightly participate in politics, Alfred de Vigny, anxious to keep his hands unsullied, confided to his journal, with Lamartine in mind (and with a revelatory change in personal pronoun) that

> "When one has risen too high by Thought and has seen too far, one should not dabble in action, which coarsens and diminishes you."

That Lamartine was a poet who meddled in matters outside his province and had no sense of practical realities is an idea that dies hard.

FOR HIM, THE FATE of his country and of the world was the poet's province. The visionary poet stood in the limbo between the old order that was crumbling and the unborn new; in spirit he attended celestial councils; he was a prophet with a sacred mission, inspired to seize "the keys of the dread future" or even to restrain the parties. In his case, it was not conventional Pindaric rhetoric. This otherwise cool-headed lover of common sense took his divine mission literally and extended it from poetry to politics, at a time when the best minds felt they were living in an era similar to that of the rise of Christianity. Here is one of the most disconcerting aspects of Lamartine for the modern reader.

The problem was how to engage in the active life he so desired. At the first opportunity, during the brief restoration of Louis XVIII in 1814, Lamartine joined the royal bodyguard, a probable source of his pungent private vocabulary. By then, he was twenty-three. Previously, roads had been blocked, for the Revolution had put an end to prospects of advancement for ambitious young noblemen unless they were ready—as he was not—to serve Bonaparte. While waiting, the bored and frustrated young man, exceedingly tall and handsome, indulged in a life of pleasure: in addition to numerous affairs with plebeian as well as high-born women (the wife of one of his best friends bore him a son), he frequented prostitutes on his first visit to Naples, engaged in heavy gambling and accumulated debts. His uncle cuttingly referred to him as a sack with a hole.

It has been said that Lamartine was almost cured of gambling by his love affair with the dying Creole, Madame Julie Charles, the most celebrated model for Elvire; and that he did stop on his sensible marriage to the well-to-do, high-principled and rather plain Miss Birch, a distant relative of the Churchill family. Yet if he left the gaming tables, he never ceased to be a gambler. From his gambling it may be deduced that he was secretly in revolt against his right-thinking family, thirsty for excitement and risk, tempted—like Byron—by the abyss.

Throughout his life, employing legacies or his considerable literary earnings, he would speculate, usually without success, in land, in the vine harvest, in exporting wines to America. As he would vividly put it: "I am still a gambler.... The vines form a huge gaming table. Sun and cloud are its two croupiers who toss you treasure or ruin."[2] Always there loomed the mirage of immense profits. He nursed the illusion that he had a remarkable head for business (just as he was convinced that in politics he was more astute than those with a reputation for cunning). In all this, Lamartine had much in common with Balzac's bizarre characters—and indeed, with Balzac himself, who used him in part as a model for the self-infatuated and calculating poet-politician, Canalis (while tactfully distinguishing between his creation and the poet of *Jocelyn*, whom he met in the literary salons).

[2] Maurice Toesca, *Lamartine ou l'amour de la vie* (1969), p. 307.

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One of the more attractive aspects of Lamartine is the way he did not remain fixed in the opinions of his class like many of his close friends. Among these was a nephew of the sombre counter-revolutionary thinker, Joseph de Maistre, whom the young poet knew well. For Lamartine made his poetic debut as a Catholic Legitimist, or supporter of the elder branch of the Bourbon house. He was launched in Madame Julie Charles's salon, which was frequented by the influential theocratic writer, Louis de Bonald. It was only gradually that Lamartine moved away from this position, partly as a consequence of disillusion with old-style place-seeking in antechambers, of disgust with the inflexibility and folly of the royalist *ultras*, and partly as a result of spiritual doubt which spread imperceptibly to the political sphere.

He came to value liberty as well as order, and to believe in the inevitability of change. His private discussions when a diplomat in Italy with such equivocal liberals as the agnostic Stendhal and the Catholic Manzoni, author of *I Promessi Sposi*, may have helped to modify his views further. Lamartine could be found proposing wider representation in government in order to avoid "excessive demands." He had indeed come a long way from the time when he complained that the government granted far too much in advance to the liberal opposition. On being received into the *Académie Française* in April 1830, he publicly proclaimed his support for the liberal gains of the Charter of 1814, against the advice of his friend, the Duc de Rohan.

Alphonse de Lamartine

By 27 June 1830, Lamartine could foresee the coming upheaval. From that day can be dated his formal commitment to political action (though he had dreamed of being a *député* since 1824). With the Revolution of July 1830, he glimpsed anarchy, the possible destruction of France and Europe. What could be done to avoid this dread prospect? One must concern oneself not with memories but with real needs. After the Three Glorious Days, Lamartine distinguished between "*Revolution as action*" and "*Revolution as principle*", the latter being in his view one of the great, fruitful ideas that renew society.[3] The idea of liberty and equality, consecrated by law, stands as far above the aristocratic or feudal idea as Christianity above paganism, he told his school-friend, Aymon de Virieu who, despite all Lamartine's persuasive attempts to wean him from opinions qualified as good enough for their old nannies, remained aloof. Neutrality for Lamartine meant "a crime against oneself." He propounded commitment not to a party but to political action itself as a human right, a virtue, a proper form of self-expression and self-realisation.

Lamartine's evolution might be based on his dream of an heroic role and destiny, but it was also rooted in fears for his country and for Europe, and a genuine desire to find a practical way to cope with those fears. Idealistic, messianic he might be, but not strictly utopian. He had no love for systems, no delusions about transforming human nature or about permanence in human affairs. The death of the cherished consumptive Julie Charles, the loss of his infant son, of two of his sisters in one year, the death of his beloved mother in a tragic accident—all these not only made him the supreme poet of grief and the quest for consolation but also contributed to his gnawing awareness of transience. He once told Aymon de Virieu that he knew how absurd it was for Royalist or Republican, Liberal or Saint-Simonian, to try to establish anything definitive in a transitory world. There would be instead the unforeseen, a mixture of good and bad, "but what we want . . . never: this world is not like that." To the same friend he confessed his low opinion of politicians: "I know the masks . . . I despise and loathe them, politically speaking. I have decided never again to belong to any party. . . ." That was a resolution he kept. As for the urban proletarian masses, they were blind, envious, cowardly and cruel. This was the man who could privately insist

[3] Lamartine, Letter to Aymon de Virieu, 24 October 1830, *Correspondance générale*, vol. I, pp. 68–9.

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with a certain fatuity that he had an instinctive understanding of how to deal with the masses.

By 1831, in his pamphlet *De la politique rationnelle*, Lamartine was publicly advocating reforms—freedom of the press, separation of Church and State, religious toleration, free and independent education, universal suffrage (in several stages), abolition of the death penalty. For the first time he stood, unsuccessfully, as a candidate—"*Sur les* hustings", as he informed Virieu. Writing from London, he now advocated his own brand of liberalism—the word had not yet acquired either the modish discredit or the varied meanings which later came to bedevil it—"a creative liberalism" that would be founded upon the interests and rights of all citizens. The visit he paid to England in 1831 (his second) confirmed his enthusiasm for all things English, and convinced him that Albion was not on the brink of ruin as he had previously thought, but rather two hundred years in advance of his own country. He would remain a fervent Anglophile and advocate of the English alliance.

The sale of one of the estates he had inherited enabled him to make a long-desired journey to the Near East in grand style—a library of five hundred books and a considerable armoury accompanied him and his party, including six servants, on board. This journey gave him the opportunity to examine beliefs he had taken on trust and was to leave him a changed man. Establishing his wife and young daughter Julia at Beirut, he set off to visit Pitt's niece, Lady Hester Stanhope. In his highly coloured account of this episode, she revealed to him his divine mission to gain enlightenment in the East and to serve as God's instrument for human regeneration regardless of class. Lady Hester, however, both irritated and amused, found his version of their encounter half-invented and half-incorrect, made no mention of any divine mission, and commented on the poet's foolish affectation when fondling his dog.

With his picturesque retinue, the munificent "Emir Frangi", as he was called, rode into the Holy Land. Because of the plague, he ventured only briefly into Jerusalem. Pious frauds disturbed him. He knelt to pray in that traditional repository of hopes of resurrection, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, distressed by the squabbles between its sectarian guardians. The light he sought there turned out to be that of reason. He ceased to believe in the Incarnation, settling privately for a personal form of pantheistic deism. His deism was to be reinforced by the bitter loss of his only surviving child, Julia, from consumption, on his return to Beirut. Soon the one-time darling of the aristocratic salons would find his *Voyage en Orient*, with his poems *Jocelyn* and *La Chute d'un Ange*, on the Index. While amiable in his comments on the Jews he encountered in Palestine and foreseeing that the country could again be a Promised Land, "if Providence restored to it a people and a policy of tranquillity and freedom", Lamartine became profoundly attracted to the hospitable Moslems.[4] He felt that the Moslems were supremely tolerant and, as he would assure the sceptical Alfred de Vigny, "more civilised than we are."

With the *Voyage en Orient* (1835) and the long political summary with which it concluded, Lamartine set out his claim to guide his compatriots in what he (and many of his contemporaries) regarded as a decaying society. The time had come "to formulate the new social symbol which the world begins to glimpse and understand: the symbol of love and charity between men, a policy based on the Gospel!" This naive-sounding call marked a real awareness of the need to deal with pressing social problems. With Keats, he was one to whom the miseries of the world are misery, and will not let them rest. He maintained that, as a result of increasing industrialisation, the proletarians were now in a worse condition than ever. They had sterile rights without the necessities of life, and as a class would provoke disturbances in society until socialism replaced hateful individualism.

The word "socialism" had only become current in 1834, the year before the publication of his *Voyage en Orient*. Socialism, he thought, was a kind of charity, a form of *noblesse oblige*, a sort of mutual insurance for the haves and have-nots. The idea of holding everything in common was merely a dream for, in his opinion, property was the cornerstone of society, preserver of family, work, civilisation. But property was only to be retained on a basis of justice. With its stress on justice, Lamartine's "creative liberalism" acquired that radical tinge which—despite the poet's firm rejection of radicalism—would allow Edouard Herriot, the Radical-Socialist leader, to claim the creator of *Jocelyn* as a true ancestor of the French Radical movement. In Lamartine's view, those with a superfluity would furnish the means and the instruments of labour needful for the have-nots to own their share, and would recognise that the right of humanity stands above that of property. This was Lamartine's solution not only for pre-

[4] *Souvenirs, Impressions, Pensées et Paysages pendant un Voyage en Orient 1832–1833, Oeuvres complètes* (1845), vol. 7, p. 286. For Lamartine's spiritual journey, see Henri Guillemin, "Lamartine en Terre Sainte", *A Vrai Dire* (1956), pp. 79–91.

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serving property but also for controlling the proletarian masses. It would remain the foundation of his policy.

What he did not perceive then was that such charity, offered by the rare magnanimous aristocrat, would never be enough for the deprived. Later, he would propose State charity. However, the accusation that 19th-century liberalism was primarily selfish and indifferent to economic realities can scarcely be levelled at Lamartine.

WHEN THE POET OF "Le Lac", renowned for the musicality of his verses, took his seat in December 1833, he was no great speaker. It was only as a result of hard work that he emerged as the brilliant, honeyed orator whom all would crowd to hear. At first, according to the young Liszt, an ardent admirer whose *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* were inspired by Lamartine's poems, the poet-politician "has suffered the fate of all moderates, from the start he has dissatisfied everybody. . . ." Yet Lamartine knew perfectly well what he was doing, and the risks involved which, in time of revolution, might well mean paying for his beliefs with his head.

His aim was to form a *parti de réserve* that would be called in an emergency. He fully expected to be unpopular and misunderstood—a scapegoat—for a good while. Moreover, in Paris, where mockery can be rapier-like, he knew he had the courage to face ridicule. In effect, his emergency party would consist of one man: himself. In a crisis, the country would hasten "to offer us power", and power was what he had in mind from the first. Early encouragement came from an unexpected quarter. After dinner at Prince Talleyrand's, his host took him aside to a sofa to compliment him: "You have made a truly *admirable* entry into public affairs." Lamartine demurred: "I, Prince? You are making fun of me. . . ." "Spare me your modesty", replied the wily statesman, who declared that Lamartine's strategy could not fail to place him at the very heart of the country in a few years. The poet was surprised: he thought Talleyrand, like a fair section of the Chambre des Députés, took him for a dreamer.

Equally laudatory was the diminutive socialist, Louis Blanc, who remarked that Lamartine, despite his origin and starting-point, was a democrat concerned with social reform. (As a democrat, though, Lamartine had—and retained—a pretty poor opinion of the parliamentary democracy of the day, which he thought a farce.) In the Chambre des Députés in 1835, the poet-prophet foretold that, among many urgent questions,

> ". . . the problem of the workers is the one that will cause the most dreadful explosion in contemporary society, if society and governments do not investigate it and resolve it"[5]

He had drawn his own conclusions from Saint-Simonian teachings and from the revolt of the Lyons workers in 1831 and 1834. Throughout the 1830s and '40s he could be heard advocating workers' associations, unemployment funds, compulsory insurance, savings banks, old age pensions, the right to work (though unlike Louis Blanc he did not favour State organisation of labour: only where the railways were concerned did he support State ownership). He urged free education for all as a means of mixing the classes together.

IN A FEW YEARS, Lamartine the independent voice had become a political force; he declined the offer of a Ministry and an Embassy in turn. In a great speech, he opposed (in vain) the return of Napoleon's ashes in 1840:

> ". . . I do not like these men whose official doctrine is liberty, law, progress, and who adopt as their symbol a sabre and despotism. I must own that I cannot account for it. I do not trust these contradictions. I am afraid that the key to this enigma may become only too clear one day!"

The rise of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte would eventually confirm his fears. The poet-politician had perceived what would prove an enduring aberration: libertarian fascination with despotic power and abasement before it. For Lamartine, liberty was not an end in itself but a means—the end was to win respect for human dignity in all classes of society. To a friend, the Marquis de La Grange, he wrote: ". . . let us prove that we are liberals, and then that liberalism is a more powerful means of government than intrigue and fear."[6] That is just what he would not be able to demonstrate.

In fact, apart from a few friends, he still stood alone, convinced of his divine mission. The *vates* was, however, in financial straits. The failure of his scheme to export wines to America; his lavish style of entertaining at his apartment in the Faubourg Saint-Germain and at Saint-Point, his country seat; his generous gifts to charity; the cost of running his newly-founded provincial newspaper, *Le Bien Public*—all these made inroads into his depleted funds. He gambled on restoring his fortunes with a book.

[5] Lamartine, speech of 3 February 1835, *La France Parlementaire 1834–1851, Oeuvres oratoires et écrits politiques* (1864) vol. I, p. 109.

[6] Lamartine, Letter to the Marquis de La Grange, 28 November 1842, *Correspondance de Lamartine publiée par Mme Valentine de Lamartine* (1875), vol. 6, p. 38.

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THIS WAS his controversial *Histoire des Girondins* which occupied him for four years. Despite the title, Lamartine claimed that he was not writing a historical work but one that lay between history and memoirs, and was more concerned with men and ideas than events. He was a voracious reader who examined unpublished family papers and correspondence. Besides, he had known personally some survivors of the revolutionary scene; and he interviewed others, not always to much effect, as practitioners of the oral method sometimes find. (Thus he asked a friend of Fouquier-Tinville what the blood-stained Jacobin prosecutor was really like. "Charming, always bright and cheerful", came the reply.) Lamartine's primary aim was less to attain strict accuracy than to move his readers. He sought to win them over to his vision of a pure, innocent Revolution—in this way, he would help them to avoid the grim excesses of the Terror in any upheaval that might be at hand.

SHAPED WHEN YOUNG by the ideas of the Counter-Revolution, Lamartine had long brooded on the revolutionary theme. To him, the French Revolution of 1789 appeared as an enigma, a paradox. But, unlike the *ultras* he had left behind, he could also see good and renewal there. It needed only a short step to believe that revolution provided the essential ground for renewal and was therefore a consummation devoutly to be wished. The French Revolution of 1789 announced the advent of a new idea, the democratic idea, he thought, and later, democratic government. It represented a crisis in the human spirit and would ultimately lead to a new religion (he wrote prophetically in a passage later modified for publication). This was "Revolution as principle", distinct from "Revolution as action", of which he had written years before.

In his narrative poem *Jocelyn* he had already, through his suffering village priest, envisaged revolution ambivalently as sickness or cure of the social body, or else as destroyer and creator, like Nature or God. The enduring question arises for him also: how is it that the spirit of love and justice serves hatred and crime? Is it because, while the moving spirit is divine, the instrument is human? In a celebrated image, the advancing human caravan cuts down trees—but it uses what has been destroyed to cross the abyss. With his history of the Girondins, Lamartine aspired to be the Moses for whom he prayed in *Jocelyn*, the prophet who would lead the people peacefully into the promised land of creative renewal. He told a correspondent in 1847:

> "The book in its entirety is nothing but a protest in eight volumes against this supposed necessity of crime. I have demonstrated on every page of it that revolutionary murder, in executing the victims, had served only to slay the Revolution . . ."[7]

What Lamartine, with all the power of his lyric and idealising gift, offered his readers was the prospect of an ideal revolution; here, his influence was immense and lasting.

BETWEEN THE INTENTION AND THE ACT, however, lay a considerable gap. The poet was sometimes swept away by his own words and by his peculiar sense of being in the Deity's confidence. Blood was not to be washed away with words, as he well knew; yet he could also say, in the familiar horticultural metaphor, that a nation

> "should not regret its blood when it has been shed to make eternal verities blossom. God has put this price on the germination and blossoming of his designs for mankind. Ideas grow from human blood."

He could not help feeling attracted to Robespierre as well as repelled by him, and the reason was not far to seek. The Incorruptible, too, was a self-made man. As Lamartine once informed a friend, if Robespierre had not been a scoundrel, he would have been the greatest of statesmen, "For, like me, he made something out of nothing, he created at once his ideas, his audience, his instruments, his action. . . ."[8]

When the first part of the history of the Girondins went on sale on 17 March 1847, the publishers sent the author a note at midnight to inform him of an unprecedented success. "Tonight I gambled my fortune, my literary fame and my political future on one card. I've won", the inveterate gambler rejoiced. A few months later, he attributed the work's extraordinary triumph to general dissatisfaction with the selfishness and inflexibility of Louis-Philippe's régime, to whom it foretold "the revolution of contempt."

LAMARTINE'S STRATEGY, his patient 14-year wait for the call, succeeded in February 1848, when Louis-Philippe was forced to abdicate in favour of his grandson. The country hearkened to the most popular man of the hour who, as he thought, had called into being his "ideal revolution."

It was Lamartine who rejected the Regency in favour of the Republic, and he who persuaded those who demanded the red flag to adopt the tri-

[7] Lamartine, Letter to an unknown correspondent, 5 August 1847, in Henri Guillemin, *Lamartine et la question sociale* (1946), p. 179.

[8] Lamartine, Letter to Aimé Martin, 6 July 1845, in Catalogue, Bibliothèque Nationale Exhibition, *Lamartine, le poète et l'homme d'État* (1969), p. 188.

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colour of the armies of the First Republic which, he said, had symbolised French liberty throughout the world. At 57, the former diplomat and authority on the Eastern Question became Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Provisional Government, though he was widely regarded as its real head. The measures enacted by the Provisional Government were those he himself had supported during his long wait: the abolition of slavery in the French colonies; the abolition of the death penalty for political offences; freedom of the press and of association; universal suffrage for all men over 21. As Foreign Minister, he hastened to reassure his European counterparts that the Second Republic, unlike the First, did not intend to wage war to spread the revolutionary creed. He also prided himself on the armed security police force he had formed to keep order.

At first, Lamartine felt sustained by popular adulation. But his popularity waned when things began to go badly for the uneasy coalition of disparate forces—the financial crisis; the increasing fears of the conservative bourgeoisie; the anger of the Left when he did not hasten to the side of martyred Poland; the bitter dissatisfaction of the unemployed, fobbed off with the so-called National Workshops; the attempts by the extreme Left to seize power (which he personally contrived to frustrate). The Left remained suspicious of this former Legitimist. The Right wondered what he meant by receiving their *bête noire*, the arch-conspirator Blanqui, at six o'clock in the morning, and forming an alliance with the radical Republican, Ledru-Rollin.

WHAT THE FRIGHTENED CONSERVATIVES sought was a man of action, a dictator who would do their bidding. Aurélien de Sèze, George Sand's one-time monarchist friend and early putative lover, wanted Lamartine to use the Army to seize power; but the poet declined, with mild words for those who saw him as their Leader. Some years later, Lamartine would proudly justify himself:

> "I could have seized dictatorship, presidency, ten times over, but it was at the cost of bloodshed, treason, killing. I did not want to do it."[9]

And so it was General Cavaignac who, appointed by the Assembly, took the role that Lamartine was too fastidious to assume, and savagely suppressed the June insurrection in three days of carnage. Lamartine rode unarmed to the barricades—his horse was wounded under him—in a vain attempt to seek heroic death.

He was finished and knew it. If he stood as a candidate for the Presidency of the Republic, it was in order to provide a token rallying-point for the moderates who wanted neither the extreme of the "Reds" nor that of Bonapartism. In the election that gave Louis Napoleon Bonaparte the Presidency, Lamartine came fifth (after Ledru-Rollin and Raspail). According to Victor Hugo, who was present, when Lamartine's 17,910 votes were announced to Louis Napoleon's total of almost five-and-a-half million, the Right hooted with laughter. It was indeed "The Fall of an Angel" satirised by the cartoonists. The Right never forgave him. The influential Catholic militants, whose cause he had abandoned years before, were rarely to miss the chance of insulting him, and Lamartine would say of their spokesmen (the aristocratic monarchists Montalembert and Falloux, and the acrimonious peasant-born Veuillot) that they "would vote for my death if they dared."

HE WAS HELD RESPONSIBLE for the Second Republic, and he tried to justify himself. To the Marquis de La Grange, he proudly and bitterly declared:

> "This Revolution produced a miracle that was never seen before in History: one man by himself keeping a people under control for three months and with his own hands making it reshape one by one the elements of the social structure. . . . Remember, then, that you owe him your head, your property and the right to curse him in freedom and safety on your estate."[10]

Later, he assured a Legitimist paper that he had fought the theories of the Socialists because they failed to understand that an improvement in working-class conditions might only be achieved through order, work, property. He would tell Nassau Senior in 1861 how the "Reds" had almost overthrown the Conservative Republicans on several occasions, foreseeing a more dreadful revolution than that of 1848.

It is perhaps worth remembering that Alexis de Tocqueville, who did not warm to the self-appointed saviour, finally could not help admitting that possibly "Lamartine's subterfuges and semi-connivance with the enemy, although they ruined him, saved us. Their effect was to keep the leaders of the Mountain occupied and to divide them."[11] Tocqueville came to realise how Lamartine—whose agents in the political clubs kept him

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[9] Lamartine, Letter to Mme Duport, 31 March 1852, *Correspondance* (ed. V. de Lamartine), vol. 6, p. 450. Arsène Houssaye, *Les Confessions* (1885), vol. 2, p. 345.

[10] Lamartine, Letter to the Marquis de La Grange, 4 November 1848, in Toesca, *Lamartine*, p. 461.

[11] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Recollections* (ed. Mayer & Kerr, 1970), p. 112. See also Jacques Madaule, "La Politique de Lamartine", *Europe*, July–August 1969, pp. 47–8.

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well-informed—had seen the dangers of a take-over by the extreme Left far more clearly than he himself. The author of *De la Démocratie en Amérique* eventually believed that fear of civil strife had indeed influenced the poet-politician's conduct quite as much as ambition.

How, then, to assess the poet's three months of political power? That he had a secret "divine" plan of his own is clear (from a letter he wrote to the Saint-Simonian Arlès-Dufour in 1843). Was he the great conciliator, the figure of light in a dark revolution (as Victor Hugo called him with characteristic antithesis)? Was he purposefully fighting against the extreme Left? Was he secretly working in the interests of his old friends, the royalists and conservatives, unbeknown to them, and thus—perhaps even unconsciously—in his own private interest? It could be that he was trying to ride several horses at once. In deep disappointment, the self-styled divine instrument was led to observe that ". . . God always seems to decide against those who want to do His work. . . ." Still, he affirmed, he had served divine truth at his own expense. Was it a form of delusion? "Was it a kind of folly of the Cross?" he inquired in an hour of self-doubt.[12]

LAMARTINE NEVER UNDERSTOOD what he called the ingratitude of his fellow-countrymen. He had served his country without financial reward and now, when he was burdened with debts, they would not come to his aid in sufficient numbers. He slaved nobly, like Sir Walter Scott (to whom he had once addressed a poem), in order to satisfy his creditors: producing idealised memoirs; histories of the Revolution of 1848, of the Restoration, of Turkey and Russia; and, from 1856 onwards, a series of monthly essays on world literature. Unlike Walter Scott, he could not live without the excitement of gambling and speculation, without continuing largesse to all and sundry. Others might possibly have been more sympathetic to his reiterated appeals if he had sold his remaining estates and had lived in decent poverty, but he could not bring himself to part with all his lands and the family associations he loved. For the last twenty years of his life, in declining health, he struggled bravely on, suffering constant humiliation, until—two years before his death in 1869—he lapsed into second childhood.

However, he had always refused to take the oath of fealty to *Napoléon le Petit*, which he regarded as illegal, though his views on that fellow-gambler and adventurer mellowed somewhat with time. He had never varied in favouring strong rule. Before his tragic decline, his opinions on foreign policy could still be revealing. The peace-loving Lamartine was prepared to go to war to save Europe from the domination of Russia in 1854. Long opposed to nationalism, he was worried about its growing impact in Italy and Germany. The "impasse in Europe" would inevitably lead to an explosion—an international congress should be convened. As for French conduct in Algeria, it was "a disgrace to our sense and to our humanity." Moreover, "we had no right to seize a country as large as France, occupied by many tribes", where the French were condemned to repeated cycles of violence.[13] It would be over a hundred years before another figure—who also presented himself as being "above the battle"—would end French rule in Algeria.

Lamartine appears as a daring overreacher who—unlike General de Gaulle—had the misfortune to fail. He had not taken the elementary precaution of creating a party or acquiring the support of the Army. Yet he was a seeker endowed with penetrating lucidity as well as a dreamer; at once altruistic reformer, egotist, and shrewd manipulator; a self-deceiver who also had no illusions about human folly. His sense of divine election and mission clashes with his reasonable pragmatism. Writing of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, he would say:

> "On the road to metaphysics and utopia, you will find only systems, disappointment and ruin. In politics, the experimental science *par excellence*, God did not want society to be able to turn its dreams into reality and to dispense with the test of time, the study of men, the lessons of history and the verification of facts. Between dreamers and politicians there are things as they are, in other words, what is possible . . . I believed, and I still believe, that to become a legislator a long and serious novitiate was required. . . ."[14]

The man who could write those words, despite all his very human rashness and vanity, deserves not only esteem but reconsideration. At his best he showed that the path of liberal reform, however obfuscated or maligned, demanded insight, generosity, and courage.

[12] Lamartine, Letter to M. Valette, 29 June 1853, *Lettres des années sombres 1853–1867* (ed. Guillemin, 1942), pp. 28–9.

[13] Nassau William Senior, *Conversations with M. Thiers, M. Guizot, and Other Distinguished Persons during the Second Empire* (ed. Simpson, 1878), vol. I, pp. 267–8.

[14] Lamartine, *Cours familier de littérature* (1861) vol. 11, pp. 402–3.

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Carol Rumens

Lines on the Shortest Day, to Heroes Old and New

"Since this
Both the year's, and the day's, deep midnight is."
JOHN DONNE, A Nocturnal Upon
St Lucy's Day, Being the Shortest Day

It's the year's midnight (I won't count how many
Since your last candle shivered out); now only
  Scholars try names
On the lost She who aped attentiveness,
And clasped your hand, its clever helplessness,
  To Poetry's reigns.

So you ride out their noise, and history's,
Across the pyromaniac centuries
  To these bright streets.
Hot line and wave-band mesh the stars above;
Down here, the snow grows sluttish at the shove
  Of booted feet.

As for the fact it's Christmas, there's no doubt
In London; neon and tinsel spell it out
  Wherever you're turning,
And though the sun was sepulchred all day,
There's a warm flush in the 4 o'clock night-sky
  Of money burning.

Recruited to our throng, with a lean smile
You press your nose to these alchemical
  Gold-brimming panes,
And deftly lift from each department store
A pocketful of shiny metaphor
  For deepening pain.

Dear ghost, dissolving inkwards, reinstate
The mourning tongue, the negatives we hate;
  Show hollow plenty
Your whip-lash lines, whose very commas bite
Until the tears that smart like crimson, light
  Our frozen city

—A grammar for all those who move less freely
Than snow before the wind, or darkness stealing
  Across the floor;
For hungry queues whose meat and bread are doubt,
Closing ranks as the angle from "sold out"
  Grows more severe.

The law in armour stalks their public squares,
And rust-thin words are hammered to new powers
  On anvils of dissent.

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At home, and tight, we chant a milder verse
To "Peace on earth" (From Harrods to St Paul's)
—Fine sentiment,

But not conceded by the governing will.
The West stages its cold-war vaudeville.
It's just as though
We'd cheerfully forgotten being schooled
That here our rulers rarely shoot the ruled
For saying no.

Between our market-place of wind-up stars
And the gross state with its new breed of Tsars,
What's there to choose
But this hairsbreadth infinity where you speak
And utter your peculiar heart-break,
Part fact, part ruse?

So art counsels the self, and rarely fires
A Lucy dead in conscience or desire;
Yet tyrants fear
That poets are the thin ice of their times,
Their stanzas tiny casements where red crimes
Brazenly peer.

Be patron, then, upon this darkest day
Of every fierce refusal to betray
In words or silence.
Bless if you've power, the art of all that's not
—Exile, and death, and freedoms re-begot
From nothingness.

Richard Kell

Dear Academic

Dear academic, thank you for your pains,
that vast expenditure of time and ink
on writing theses, planning courses.
Without your will-power and your brains,
your way of leading horses
to water and forcing them to drink,
what, after twenty years, remains
of any minor poet but the stink?

Bless you for teasing out the subtleties
I had no notion of: this rhythm that mimed
strenuous engagements of the bowels,
those lovelorn *r*s and *l*s and *v*s
lolling on low-pitched vowels,
the pauses beautifully timed;
and thanks for spotting profundities
in words I settled for because they rhymed.

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MEMOIR

Remembering Fred Warburg

A London Publisher & His Times—By T. R. FYVEL

THE MONTHS speed past since the death last year of my friend Fred (Fredric) Warburg at the advanced age of 82, but in my mind there is still quite a vivid memory of the summer months of 1940, during the Battle of Britain, when my wife and I shared a house in the Berkshire countryside (Scarlett's Farm) with Fred and Pamela Warburg. There can be no one left in the offices of Secker & Warburg of the people I first met there in 1938, but it is one of the perks of a book publisher's life that Fred's name is still carried through the world by the imprint of the firm he founded in 1936. I remember his comment to me on this paradox: "In financial turnover I am a midget, yet I have an internationally known name. . . ."

The name is that of a medium-sized, élitist publishing house of distinguished international authors, whose chairman Fred was for many years. Yet, looking back, I feel that had his character been slightly different, had he above all been more consistent, he might have had quite a different career, he might have become a Labour Party Minister—he had the pragmatic intelligence for it, if only in short spurts.

I think that three special things affected his life. Born in 1898, Fred was just old enough to go straight from public school to the Western front where in 1917 he took part as an artillery lieutenant in the bloody battle of Passchendaele. Did the experience lastingly influence him? Fred thought not, but I think that as a survivor he was, or he may have been, left with a certain sense of emotional indifference and detachment for life. The second thing was that, as Fred sometimes plaintively remarked, he was born one of "the poor Warburgs." Poverty is relative: there was enough money in Fred's assimilated Anglo-Jewish family to send him to Westminster and Oxford, but not much more; compared to the banker Warburgs of Hamburg, New York, and the City of London, his means were indeed modest. At any rate, from post-World War I Oxford, not knowing particularly what to do, Fred went into publishing, which he heard described as "an occupation for gentlemen", working for ten years for the solid old house of Routledge.

He married young, had three sons. Then, in the early 1930s, his marriage broke up; he had a breakdown, and resigned from his job. Recovering, he was divorced and in 1933 married Pamela de Bayou, with whom to the end he remained completely identified—this was certainly the third special fact which determined his life. Fred has described Pamela as "of volcanic temperament." One of his fellow-directors has called her "a strikingly handsome, warm-hearted, totally uninhibited dress-designer, whose loyalty to Fred, as his to her, could sometimes be embarrassing. . . ." I was later to witness the strength of that bond. Back to the '30s. Fred with his partner Roger Senhouse bought out the firm of Martin Secker (for £5,000, part of it borrowed), with its backlist of Thomas Mann and Franz Kafka among others.

That was in 1936. Fred's aim was to be not just a publisher but to become an independent Left-wing political publisher. Through the rise of Hitlerism, he had rediscovered his "Jewish identity" and in the style of the time had developed fervent socialist beliefs, and was going to publish books to promote them. But note, they were beliefs in democratic, libertarian socialism, not the Stalinist variety. That is, Fred was challenging not only the class-ridden torpor of Tory Britain under Neville Chamberlain. He would also challenge the big battalions of the authoritarian Left, represented by Victor Gollancz and his by and large pro-Stalinist Left Book Club, together with the Communists and their fellow-travellers, well entrenched in the media. Meeting him some time after, I thought that his whole undertaking was financially precarious. Still, at the time Fred Warburg's decision was an important event in British intellectual life.

FREDRIC WARBURG *(who died a year ago, at the age of 82) was* ENCOUNTER*'s first publisher.*

The relationship between Fred Warburg, George Orwell and T. R. Fyvel touched upon in this article is described at length in T. R. Fyvel's "George Orwell: a Personal Memoir", to be published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson on 26 August.

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THIS MAY SEEM a large statement today, when there are a number of small Left-wing or dissident publishers in the book market, but the differences between Britain in the 1930s and today must be taken into account. The first difference was a major one. The late '30s, with the Spanish Civil War in progress, were probably the last years when Britain played the decisive role in world history. Everything depended on whether Britain would resist Hitler's drive; that is, whether British opinion could be mobilised in time against Chamberlain and his group of appeasers; and in this task the Left-wing intellectuals in the media had their role to play. Indeed, for some it seemed their finest hour.

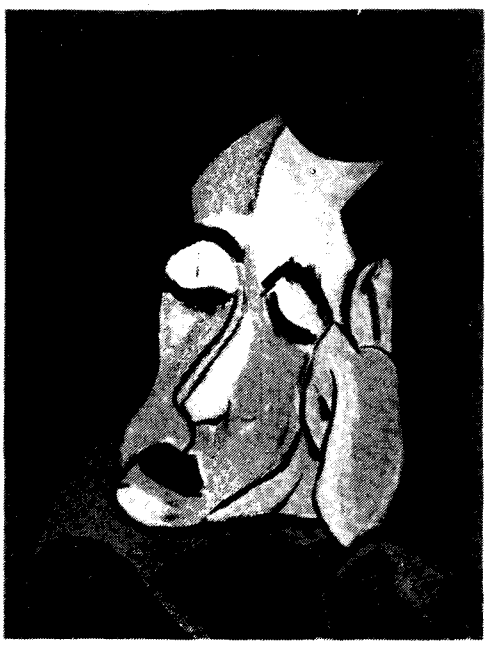
This was so because—here was another difference—such intellectuals were so many fewer than today. Britain in the '30s knew as yet no television pundits, no Sunday Supplements, no New Universities and Polytechnics. Radio was hardly listened to, sociology a mere fringe subject. Everybody on the progressive Left dutifully read the *New Statesman*—and when its editor, Kingsley Martin, with his pro-Soviet line turned down George Orwell's report from Spain, this became a major talking-point.

This was the situation in which Fred Warburg arrived to deliver his dual challenge to the old Right and the pro-Soviet Left. He published *The Black Jacobins* and *World Revolution* by the West Indian writer C. L. R. James, a leading Trotskyist, and so among the Stalin-dominated Left became known at once as "the Trotskyist publisher." He published *Halfcaste* by Cedric Dover, a young Anglo-Indian, a book I found particularly interesting, because with some naiveties it was a telling survey of the global nature of built-in white racism, even within the anti-Hitler front. He published André Gide's ironical *Return from the USSR* which especially infuriated the Communists because Gide, who had gone to Moscow as an apparent fellow-traveller, returned to say that thought-control under Stalin was worse than under Hitler. He published Boris Souvarine's massive biography, *Stalin*, which was illuminating about Stalin's notorious Moscow treason trials. He published some anti-Nazi and anti-Fascist books, but also George Orwell's exposure of Communist misdeeds in the Spanish Civil War, *Homage to Catalonia*, which Victor Gollancz had rejected sight unseen. Orwell was, of course, later to bring a large income to Secker & Warburg; but in 1938–9 this was not yet apparent. Fred told me that the Communists and their friends denigrated Orwell's Spanish book so successfully that in its first year it sold only a few hundred copies.

All in all, of the ninety books Fred published up to September 1939, thirty were concerned with presenting Socialist or progressive views independent of Stalinism; some of them Trotskyist, some (like Orwell's) simply unorthodox and truthful. Collectively they without doubt had some impact on British thinking, but if this had gained Fred a reputation as their courageous publisher, it brought him little financial profit. Indeed, undercapitalised as he was, he hovered all the time on the brink of financial crisis, which after a slapdash start made him, when I first met him, cautious to the ungenerous side in money matters towards his authors.

MY FIRST CONTACT with him was in late 1938, around the time of Munich, in his office beside the Temple. I can remember my first impression—that of a tall man of forty, stiff-backed from an old war injury, sitting in an extremely well-furnished book-lined room. He had a striking face, very long and narrow—a typically Spanish face sometimes found among Jews of German descent. He was dressed in elegant country man's checked tweeds. He told me that after being totally remote from any Judaism, Hitler had reawakened his Jewish feelings. I recall his saying that a young "Aryan" German exile, Sebastian Haffner, was writing a brilliant anti-Nazi book for him called *Germany, Jekyll and Hyde*—and he spoke of it as though it were his own thought-out book, his own political weapon.

In fact, he mainly talked politics rather than publishing. After some years abroad, I found that in England in 1938–9 everybody was on about the



FREDRIC WARBURG
By Pamela de Bayou

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political situation. Fred talked—very fluently and confidently, it seemed to me—about the fall of the Spanish Republic, about Czechoslovakia, Hitler, and Chamberlain. He believed there would soon be war with Germany, in which Britain should be led by Churchill. He referred to a conversation he had had with Aneurin Bevan and spoke about the possibility of talking to Beaverbrook. Chamberlain's Tory Britain was outworn; the Labour Party was inert; but out of a war with Hitler a "new socialist Britain" might emerge. He sounded pleased with himself, and his résumé also sounded logical and impressive. I thought that in the conflict to come he might well be given quite an important role.

I still thought so in January 1940, during the "phoney war", when he introduced me to Orwell as part of a project he had of forming "a group of like-minded people to discuss War Aims." I remember admiring the forceful efficiency with which he extricated his German author, Sebastian Haffner, from internment. I still thought so during the summer of 1940 when my wife and I shared Scarlett's Farm in Berkshire with Fred and his wife. Orwell was a frequent visitor; the three of us conjured up the SEARCHLIGHT BOOKS series on war aims, which Orwell led off with *The Lion and the Unicorn*,[1] with quite a respectable list of authors to follow. Fred took it very seriously. In his publisher's puff he wrote that the aim of the SEARCHLIGHT BOOKS was "to criticise what was rotten in Western civilisation" and "to supply constructive ideas for the difficult period ahead . . . for a planned Britain at the head of a greater and freer British Commonwealth. . . ." To be sure, the summer of 1940 was an extraordinary time in which many people used strange rhetorical words—even Churchill did so.

But by this time I also knew that Fred was not going to play any particular role in the War. The first reason was something lacking in his make-up, and the second reason was his wife, Pamela de Bayou, then a handsome woman around forty, a "child of nature." Intelligent, half-educated, she was a first-class designer, a wonderful gardener; she had definite talents as an untrained portrait painter. Full of vitality, she also seemed completely uninhibited. She would make the most outrageous statements—about friends, acquaintances, public figures, authors or causes—while Fred listened detachedly and smiled. For on one point Pamela was not scatty: she was absolutely loyal to Fred, but she also possessed his feelings absolutely and he was completely happy to be so possessed by this delightful and admired woman who was his wife.

And so there was the contrast. In London, in the daytime, Fred could seem an intellectual of political drive and ambition as he busied himself with the SEARCHLIGHT BOOKS and the other books he published, and pronounced on the need for progressive social War Aims. But back in the country, the evenings were a matter of good food, wine and light gossip, evenings ruled by Pamela as she chattered away uninhibitedly, with Fred as a contented husband and amused, detached listener. In this atmosphere all Fred's cares of the day were forgotten, pushed off to the next day, and so it went on. No, Fred was not going to play any special role in the War. He would remain just a modest struggling publisher; able and incisive, perhaps, but small and precarious just the same.

Two more incidents threw light on this. When we fire-watched 2-3 nights a week during the Blitz at his office in Essex Street, and especially during one tense night when flames seemed to shoot sky-high from the bombed Temple area right next to us, I saw that Fred was quite remarkably fearless; not so much just courageous, as ironically detached, almost amused at the sound of bombs above, as if it were a matter of indifference whether there would be an end to Fredric Warburg or there would not. Well, he was a survivor of Passchendaele, after all. I noted another instance of Fred's detachment from parts of life when he told me in 1940 that he had not seen his three sons by his first wife for some years. That he seemed not to mind this at all appeared to me an odd attitude for a Jewish father. Were Pamela and his authors, the Manns, Kafkas, and Orwells, a substitute family for him? I think they adequately filled his life, and that behind the grand political talk he was perfectly content to be Pamela's husband and a small if distinguished publisher.

And one all the time struggling to stay alive.

I DON'T KNOW whether Fred profited or lost through insurance from having his office bombed; but in any case, when I returned to London in 1945 at the end of the European war, I found him sitting in a new office, dressed elegantly (as ever, in country tweeds), looking outstandingly pleased with himself with a small typescript on his desk—Orwell's *Animal Farm*. After giving me a sharp outline of Orwell's satiric fable, Fred told me almost triumphantly that it had been turned down by Victor Gollancz, by T. S. Eliot at Faber's, and by Cape, that Gollancz said it would "damage Anglo-Soviet relations", that some members of his own office and even his wife Pamela thought that a book depicting Communists as pigs was "insulting to the heroic Red Army", but that he, Fred, had not the slightest intention of letting himself be diverted from swift publication. Once again he seemed like Fred War-

[1] Recently reissued by Penguin, £1.25.

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burg, the man of political influence—I think he was quite disappointed when the political row he and Gollancz and others expected over *Animal Farm* never quite materialised.

In those first post-War years, it was through Orwell that Fred felt himself kept in the political limelight and here he made a fateful error and had a triumph, both connected with *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The error came in the autumn of 1948 when Orwell, out in the wilds of Jura, faced with a rapid deterioration in his health and with the daunting task of producing a clean-typed final draft of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, asked Fred to find him a secretary-typist. Fred and his partner Roger Senhouse tried and failed in the grim approaching winter months to find a young woman willing to go to the remoteness of Jura. As a result, Orwell on Jura, ill as he was, sat up in bed typing out the clean copy of the manuscript himself, all 150,000 words of it, and then had his final collapse from which he did not recover.

Fred wrote afterwards that his failure to find Orwell a typist haunted him, and well might it do so: I know, indeed, that he felt it badly. But then—to be sure, London towards the end of 1948 was still a cold, depressed, and rationed place, and no doubt stenographers were still in short supply; but when I learned about the matter after Orwell's collapse, I felt that at a price, probably an extravagant price, one could have found a girl willing to go to Jura, and surely by now no price should have been too extravagant to save Orwell from such labour. Fred was not one of the banking Warburgs and by 1948, alas, no longer even had the imagination for extravagance. Years later, when we talked about it, Fred told me that as far as he recalled, he and Roger Senhouse had held out "very fair pay" to potential typists to go to Jura, but of course, in such an emergency, more than that was needed. I felt that Fred as I knew him in 1939–40 would have understood this, but eight more years of unceasing struggle over small sums to keep Secker & Warburg viable had made him ultra-careful in spending any money. Still, this is hindsight.

The triumph came with the publication of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. On receiving Orwell's typescript, Fred at once became again his forceful, optimistic self. He immediately dictated a five-page memorandum to his staff, declaring the book to be a terrifying masterpiece. Visiting Orwell where he lay desperately ill in a sanatorium at Cranham in the Cotswolds, he lectured him firmly on conserving his strength. In the autumn of 1949 he had Orwell moved to University College Hospital, London, into the care of Pamela's friend, the chest specialist Dr Andrew Morland (who had earlier attended D. H. Lawrence).

Nineteen Eighty-Four had earlier, in summer 1949, been published both in London and New York. Fred told me that against some misgivings in his office, he had ordered an edition of 25,000, very large for the time and his still slender resources, but he optimistically had no doubts about the intellectual impact of the book, and here, of course, he was to be completely justified. When he heard that Orwell was upset because some Right-wing critics in America had treated the book as a straight attack on British socialism, Fred straightaway went to Cranham sanatorium to talk to Orwell; he made notes and firmly incorporated them in a press release he himself drafted. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, he said in the press release, was not a prophecy of what would happen but what could happen in an age of atomic terror. It was not an attack on British socialism, but

> "... if there is a failure of nerve and the Labour Party breaks down in its attempt to deal with the harsh problems with which it will be faced, tougher types than the present Labour leaders will inevitably take over, drawn probably from the ranks of the Left, but not sharing the liberal aspirations of those now in power."

Not quite Orwellian prose, perhaps, but as I discussed the matter with him, I felt that once more, as in 1939–40, Fred was enjoying ideological conflict; it was as if *Nineteen Eighty-Four* were a kind of joint endeavour, with himself the general in charge of the campaign. Perhaps one thing should always be said for Fred Warburg: that from early on, from 1937 when he courageously commissioned *Homage to Catalonia*, he was at critical points not just a publisher, but a firm friend and supporter to Orwell. Merit enough.

WITH ORWELL'S DEATH I think Fred's political ambitions died, too. Still, he was to have one more hour in the public limelight. In 1954 he stood in the dock charged with having published an obscene libel, namely an American novel called *The Philanderer*, by Stanley Kauffmann. By today's standards this was a mildly sexy book, but in 1954 the laws of morality were different. Most publishers, when faced with an obscenity charge, pleaded guilty, paid their fine and withdrew the offending material; not Fred. He fought the case defiantly, indeed with a risk of going to prison, but was triumphantly acquitted, thereby changing the history of British "freedom to publish." I met him during the case: stiffly upright, elegantly dressed, smiling sardonically; impervious to the risk he was taking ... detached.

He wrote a witty account of his experience of being tried for obscenity in *The New Yorker*. In the following years he produced two volumes of autobiography, *An Occupation for Gentlemen* (1959) and *All Authors Are Equal* (1973). They

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were not very profound, but always informative—if aloof. In 1952, not too long after Orwell's death, Fred had after much painful hesitation given up his struggle for financial independence, and the firm of Secker & Warburg became part of the Heinemann group. I remember that Fred had been fearful of losing his editorial independence too; but, quite the contrary, he retained it while at last obtaining adequate financial resources. So from then until his retirement from the chairmanship of his firm in 1972, he remained the gentlemanly publisher of distinguished books; the publisher of H. G. Wells, Thomas Mann, Franz Kafka, George Orwell, Angus Wilson; of Colette, of Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities*, of Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum*, Yukio Mishima's *The Sound of Waves*, and so on.

Fred and Pamela lived near me across Primrose Hill and I often visited them. For a publisher, Fred entertained relatively little. They seemed to me a remarkably self-contained couple; Pamela made constant new starts in her painting, or Fred listened fondly while Pamela talked away assertively, mixing sense and nonsense. I heard that in his mid-seventies, Fred had to be slightly prised out of his chairmanship of Secker & Warburg. I was not surprised. Being a publisher was not only his job. It was an essential part of the whole elegant personality he had built up for himself. The death of Pamela some years into his retirement was, I think, for all that he did not show it outwardly, a mortal blow: another, even more essential part of his life was gone. Towards the end, I visited him at intervals, walking across Primrose Hill to his solitary apartment. The last occasion was in his eighty-third year. His mind was wandering a little, his memory failing (but then so was mine), except for the remote past about which we reminisced, but although he was frail he was in some dignified way still his detached self, and after half an hour he gave me a precise order: "You must go now. . . . Now I must rest."

His death came soon after. It was that of a man who as a teenage officer had fought at Passchendaele on the Western Front; who had been the patient and loving husband of an erratic wife; who had been an early supporter and friend of George Orwell, and a publisher of distinguished books who gave his name, "Warburg", to a firm which today has a world-wide reputation. Not a bad record.

Oh yes, one more thing. Through accident in the early 1950s I became marginally involved in the founding of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and through further accidents became more closely involved in the affairs of the British Committee for Cultural Freedom. Being asked to strengthen its membership, I approached Malcolm Muggeridge and Fred Warburg. As Fred recalled it in his book, when he asked what duties membership implied, I answered: "Absolutely nothing!"

Practically nothing, indeed. The British Committee for Cultural Freedom met some half dozen times at Malcolm Muggeridge's house near Sevenoaks, and the sessions were pretty light-hearted. I remember Muggeridge saying that Britain's trouble was not too little but too much cultural freedom: he challenged us to think of any buffoon who could not find a platform to sound off from. Another time, Stephen Spender spoke up and said it would be of value to have a cultural magazine and everybody agreed this was a good idea: if such a magazine were got going, the British Committee could disband itself.

And so came a day when Fred Warburg, Malcolm Muggeridge and I travelled to Paris to discuss the idea of a magazine with the dignitaries of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. For some reason I cannot recall, we travelled by night ferry which started late, keeping us waiting for hours. Fred Warburg, the oldest of us, became cross and grumbled vehemently about the discomfort of this enterprise into which he had been seduced. I still remember Muggeridge's comment. All people were peculiar, he said; some were womanisers, some were odd in money matters; some, like Fred, complained excessively about the discomfort of any break in their routine. One just had to take people as they were. Wise words.

In Paris, we were confronted by the representatives of the Congress with the idea that, yes, there should be a new English-language magazine loosely supported by the Congress, but it should be an "international review" edited and printed in Paris.

We all three opposed what seemed an appalling idea, Fred Warburg foremost. As an English publisher, he informed the Congress people in one of his firm speeches that a magazine published in Paris would not only be wrong in editorial content for the English reader. Everything about it would be wrong. The very type-faces would look foreign. Well, our argument—Fred's above all—won the day. The outcome was that a new Anglo-American cultural monthly in London would be backed by the Congress. Irving Kristol would come from New York and he and Spender would be the first joint editors. Fred Warburg, although otherwise not active in the new magazine, remained for some years as its publisher. Stephen Spender thought up a name, ENCOUNTER, and—well, here we are, and saying farewell to Fred Warburg.

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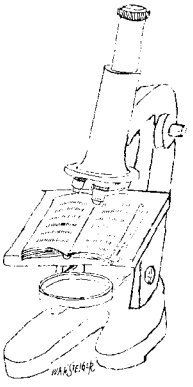
NOTES & TOPICS

European Journal

By François Bondy

Boomerangs?

Zurich



IN ITS strict usage and proper employment, the "boomerang" is a very accurate and purposeful weapon indeed, a missile "thrown so as to hit an object in a different direction from that of projection, or so as to return to or behind the starting point. . . ." But the *Oxford Dictionary* goes on to cite "Holmes" (Oliver Wendell, not Sherlock, I suspect) to the effect: "*Like the strange missile which the Australian throws, your verbal boomerang slaps you on the nose.*" In that stumbling, bumbling sense I want to record the boomerangs of Helsinki and Moscow, of East and West Berlin. What objects have been hit, what noses slapped?

The so-called "Final Act" of Helsinki had no real finality about it at all, and the diplomats went on trying to finalise further in Geneva and Belgrade and now Madrid, all in the interests of "European Peace and Security." East and West, neutrals and unaligned among them, have been at it for ten years now. For the USSR the military and diplomatic aspects were clearly the major interest, while the Western democracies paid rather more attention to "Basket Three" into which the more humane issues were bundled. The Russians had taken the initiative, and the Western powers went along with it only after much scepticism and hesitation. That the negotiations took place at all, thus tacitly recognising Soviet gains in the post-1945 frontiers, was already registered as a victory for Moscow. Soon the West, in turn, was to claim its triumphs in the promises and commitments to further "human contacts" and advance "human rights."

Thus there was an exchange of missiles in opposite directions—how stands the balance of hits and misses? What happened first in the Eastern bloc of nations was the emergence of a whole host of independent "Helsinki committees", watch-dog groups, which began to direct systematic attention (it called for much courage) to the violations and misdemeanours in each of the Soviet-influenced "satellites." Such civic groups on behalf of civil liberties or cultural freedom are, of course, routine matters of democratic protest; but there is, in the diplomatic phrase of the day, no "symmetry" here. Neither in old or new Russia is criticism and dissent a self-evident thing. When the Czar was moved to abolish the slavery of the serfs he went on to exile the students who were enthused enough to congratulate him—for, after all, subjects are not supposed to have opinions of their own, and certainly not to express them in public. In the national struggle between autocracy and liberalism, the tradition of the autocrat whose police officials do not tolerate unauthorised viewpoints was the Russian force which triumphed.

For a brief moment in both Prague and Moscow there was the feeling that "Basket Three" of Helsinki was providing a kind of new Magna Carta. The "Carta" movement was soon silenced. One sometimes can feel bitter enough in the face of the horrendous repression to suspect that due to the illusions of Helsinki more individuals were persecuted than would otherwise have been the case. Nevertheless, the promises and guarantees and commitments that had been agreed continued to be a source of real embarrassment to the ideological bosses of the police censorship. Solemn, if not binding, the "Final Act" was supposed to be; and the underlining of affixed signatures in Helsinki makes the Polish Martial Law look even worse than it is.

Obviously the contradictions were built in from the beginning—on the one hand an international agreement, duly underwritten by all sides; on the other hand, the safety-clause of "non-intervention in internal affairs." The leaders in the Kremlin felt certain they couldn't be touched, couldn't be hurt; they have grown accustomed for a very long time now to embarrassment in the face of charges of

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hypocrisy. Still, I wonder whether they think it today such a brilliant idea as when they cajoled the Americans and their allies to make the journey to the Helsinki station. "Boomerang" may be an unoriginal aboriginal analogy; but given the verbal missiles which US Ambassador Max Kampelman, for one, has been hurling in Madrid at the keepers of the Gulag, some noses have surely been slapped.

SHORTLY BEFORE last Christmas, the authorities in East Berlin gave the poet Stephan Hermlin a nice present, and it was (as he said) "the fulfilment of a lifetime's dream." They enabled him to hold an All-German conference for peace, and to invite all the leading writers of Western Germany to join him in solemn and binding prayers for an endangered world. A whole host of writers responded to what he dreamingly called his "private invitation." True, every one was allowed to speak his piece as he pleased—even if Günter Grass began to grumble at the news from Poland on that weekend of 13 December, and Robert Jungk objected to not being able to get out of the lift in the Academy of Arts building to mix and mingle peacefully with the young artists on other floors. Still, everybody in East Berlin and the *DDR* could follow what was going on—by watching the filmed proceedings on West Berlin television (the East TV thought the affair so "private" that it broadcast nothing).

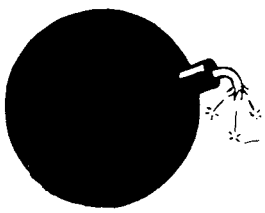
Now I see that the entire protocol of Hermlin's All-German Writers Congress has been published in West Berlin by Günter Grass's publisher, the Luchterhand Verlag. In the foreword the statement can be found that it will also shortly be published by the Academy of Arts ("*in ungekuerzter Form*") in the *DDR* "simultaneously." Evidently the clocks run on different time over there, for the book ("unshortened") is not yet out; and indeed it might even be lengthened, for one hears that an additional text from the famous literary pen of Erich Honecker, the Communist leader of East Germany, is holding up the publication date. When it finally appears it might turn out to be only an "internal document" for Academicians, or a protocol for "internal use only", or possibly one of those rare books sold "under the counter." Something has to be printed soon if Stephan Hermlin's dream is to have its proper documentation. How nightmarish it would be to have the record of this almost unique All-German get-together smuggled over the Berlin Wall from tainted Western sources.

Once again, as in the years of the Stockholm Appeal illustrated with Picasso's famous dove, the campaign for Peace comes like light from the East. But the whole machinery of total control has become increasingly difficult when TV cameras are allowed to focus on all the little dark corners. More than that. Some East German pastors took the religious call for peace most seriously, and even called for peace demonstrations amongst their own people. Stefan Heym suggested that there was enough "militarism" (at least in the school textbooks) for the East Germans to be getting on with. A few spokesmen were venturesome enough to ask about the absence of that eminent fighter for peace, Robert Havemann (under house-arrest in East Berlin until his death in April). These are notes and tones not often heard in the *DDR*. Cacophony of this kind would almost be enough to make a nightmare of Hermlin's dream.

Whether it will turn out to be a boomerang or not, all this surely belongs to the "Paradox of Helsinki" as the "Final Act" becomes more tentative every day.

The Trial Begins

Rome



THE diffusion of disbelief here is very curious. The evidence is massive, the trial has begun—but that the terrorists of the Red Brigade who kidnapped Aldo Moro four years ago, killed his bodyguard, and then murdered him after 55 days of "interrogation", are really and truly the culprits is somehow not very convincing for many Italians.

The President of the Republic, Pertini, suspects that terrorism is manipulated from the East; the celebrated novelist Leonardo Sciascia writes darkly of the real men in the background who will probably never be apprehended; Moro's widow herself has called attention to mysterious American wire-pullers. . . .

To be sure, the terrorist groups were never exclusively national affairs. The Italian terrorists certainly had connections (through the late Giangiacomo Feltrinelli) with the German Baader-Meinhof "underground" as well as in the Middle East with the Palestinian guerrillas. But all the mutterings about some hidden "Central" or "Mr Big" who held the strings to all these "puppets", the *burattini*, has never led to the presentation of any real evidence at all. One can understand the national psychology which doesn't truly want to get at the native roots of this horrendous phenomenon. Still, that doesn't change the nature of the various twists-and-turns of the complicated conspiracy theories—Italian alibis. For almost a

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decade the young men of political violence openly presented themselves on the national scene as ideologues of the extreme Left, dedicated to the use of force to gain their revolutionary ends. The governments, the parliamentary parties, the influential newspapers, all pooh-poohed them. They were unimportant, not to be taken seriously, a passing excrescence. After all there was only terrorism of the neo-fascist Right; and sometimes it camouflaged itself in leftist garb. One knows of important reports prepared by local prefects which went into alarming detail about the rising power of the Red Brigades; they landed in the file-and-forget files. In the year 1977 there were sensational murders and bombings; but only in the following year, with the kidnapping of Aldo Moro, did the political establishment wake up, come to its senses, move to practical self-defence efforts. So many had tried, in vain, to tell them all about the nature and diversity of terrorist ideology—the connections between legal and illegal groups, between "*Autonomia*" which offered itself as a representative of the revolutionary proletariat, and groups like "*Prima Linea*" all of which had journals and pamphlets which could be read and studied. But you'll never know if you don't want to know. Even newspaper editors were full of ironies and little satires, pleasant jokes and harmless feature stories . . . until they themselves were targeted and shot, bombed, and eliminated; and then, at last, they began to take the threat seriously, even if their attentions were refocused on "secret foreign forces . . . overseas agencies . . . big shots abroad. . . ."

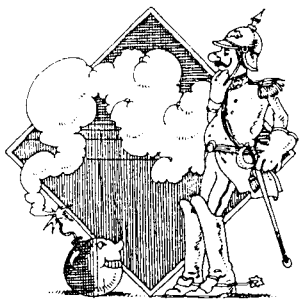
THE MAN IN THE Roman "Arena" who dominates all the 43 other accused is Mario Moretti, and no one who has taken in the scene has any doubt that here is no "*burattino*", but quite evidently a powerful gang leader who has full authority over the others. Their fanaticism cannot be denied; they were "propagandists of the deed", violent men of passionate conviction; and they were tools of nobody. Even the so-called "*pentiti*", the handful who confessed in remorse and to some extent changed their views (and who hoping as they do for a lighter sentence thus have no reason to hold anything back), do not for a moment suggest a "foreign plot." What we know is clear: as clear as the fact that the genuine conspiracy was ignored for years, and almost a decade of democratic self-defence neglected in fanciful flights into imaginary melodramas. It was all marked by that special kind of blindness which pretends to some deeper and clearer sight.

The kidnappers of Aldo Moro had one main objective: to dramatise and demonstrate the powerlessness of the State; that bullets were more important than ballots, more decisive, obviously more deadly; and that an ideological group which could not win a percentage of the parliamentary vote could move forcefully into the centre of the political stage. (There is, as for so much of the terrorist dramaturgy, a new Italian word for it, building on the slow increasing recognition of the PLO—"*olpizzazione*.") By calculated violence they would make it, too.

The operation failed. The "armed party" can still inflict much damage in society, but the curtain has come down on this particular phase of the drama. The Roman trial has begun, and will after a while even manage to become boring. The Italian public will soon, after not too long, as the witnesses drone on and the theatrical incidents repeat themselves, find the spectacle less instructive than it is at the moment. But a great lesson is there for all to see—how a democracy, plagued by severe social and economic troubles of all kinds, pulled itself together to face the threat of internal civil war and to defeat it.

Germans Among Themselves

The Hague



THE PHRASE that has been picked up here from East Berlin is "*deutsch-deutsch*", that new and neutral diplomatic coinage which avoids the old implications of hostility which still mark the usages of "East Germany" and "West Germany." The old usages remind one of the "Cold War", when East-West distinctions between freedom and unfreedom, between liberal democracy and one-party dictatorships were felt to be of some importance. The illusions of *détente* helped to bury all that. Even words and ideas had built-in "tensions" which had to be "relaxed." So it came to pass that Communist countries in Eastern Europe which had for decades liquidated all socialist parties, and for whom social democrats were still a species of "social-fascists", came to be referred to in all the media as . . . "the socialist countries"! The old conventional designation of "the so-called *Deutsche Demokratische Republik*" (which, it used to be said, was neither German nor democratic nor a republic) disappeared almost everywhere. Only Axel Springer's newspapers in Bonn still put it in quotation marks; for the rest

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it is simply and quietly the *DDR* (although a few old-timers are still to be heard saying "*die Zone*").

"German-German" has thus come to be the adjective that characterises the relations between the two independent sovereign states which emerged from the Allied and Soviet division of the defeated Third Reich. It is a quiet word of discreet camouflage, disguising all the differences, and merging all the contrasting colours into an environmental blur. It has now also been conscripted into service for the Peace Movement, uniting all Germans on both sides of the "East-West" frontier, as if both were being mortally endangered by the NATO defence establishment. I have already written, above, on the historic conference of writers and intellectuals which was held last winter in East Berlin—a "private initiative" of the East Berlin poet, Stephan Hermlin—to launch the new all-German peace campaign. And now in Scheveningen there has been a second round of fraternal talks, mixed with a little agit-prop and a few additional boomerangs. Once again the West German media have given the affair full coverage, as contrasted with the selective censorship of the East German controlled organs; nevertheless, what goes out on Western TV is also seen in the East, and what the Soviet-German strategists gain on the straightaway they have been losing on the roundabouts.

One could catch up here on what took place earlier by either reading the full protocol of the East Berlin conference as published in the West or by locating the shorter limited edition published by the *DDR Akademie*. Who could be surprised by the obvious fact that the *DDR* wants the German-German peace talks to have the widest possible publicity in the West but the least possible exposure in the East? Very obvious; but it is one of those little disagreeable truths of political life that are rarely taken up in these round-table discussions. The words delude; there is no symmetry here; a free and balanced exchange is missing. There may be a certain thrill to the *Samizdat* aspect of unorthodox remarks and texts "getting through", but it is only a substitute for what a self-respecting, genuinely Open Forum should insist upon: equal time, reciprocity.

GIVEN THIS DISTORTION, most of what is said and done at these affairs appears to be blurred around all the edges. Thus, all the West German writers from the *Bundesrepublik* (and from West Berlin, as well as from a few other West-European lands) get up and hold forth as if they were demonstrating some rare kind of civic courage against old-style arrogant princely authorities, as if they were exercising their rights of free speech in some repressive, highly endangered context. Actually they are as free as birds, and can sing without hindrance. So they should; but some one should remind them from time to time that this is the advantage, not enjoyed by all their brethren, of living under the rule of law and human rights. I happen to like the idea of nonconformity, even when it is practised without risks and dangers; but it should not be put on dramatic show as an exercise in pseudo-heroics. Nobody is stopping anybody around here for speaking his piece on this, or indeed any other subject.

The Germans may often talk as if they invented the word peace; yet they do have a special point about being on the line of the military frontier between the two armed camps and therefore becoming the most likely opening battlefield in the event of a European conflict. Consequently, when the talk ranges from art and culture to literature, at bottom the theme is really one of a shared national anxiety. This is clear, but less clear is what the Germans by themselves are supposed to be able to do about this, given their dependence on rival East-West security systems. Reunify and constitute a new neutral belt? Break out of NATO and the EEC, COMECON and the Warsaw Pact, and become a no-man's-land in the heart of Europe? Many in the West are willing to open discussions on anything, if there seems to be a real hope of avoiding war; nobody (except a handful) in the East can speak quite freely on such loaded security matters without a signal from Moscow.

IN THE OLD DAYS, a decade or two ago, the Germans recognised the connections between "*Frieden*" and "*Freiheit*" and held out single-mindedly for peace with liberty. But, again, in the new blur of recent political astigmatism the one (the former) has become for the *Friedenskämpfer* all-sufficient; "better Red than dead", indeed better Red than living on in the frightful shadow of the new weapons which the Americans and all the NATO powers (including Hellmut Schmidt's government) are asking for their defence against a relentlessly rearming USSR. As a matter of fact the very idea of "peaceful coexistence" called for a kind of decoupling of the ideals of a peaceful world and a free world. Not that this necessarily calls for a Woodrow-Wilsonian "war to make the world safe for democracy" or an Eisenhoweresque "crusade for freedom." The explodable fissionable planet may well have to reconcile itself to an uneasy truce, with raging political conflicts and even limited military engagements, in a time of "Neither War nor Peace."

But there is surely no need to have to reconcile oneself to a new kind of Orwellian *newspeak* where nothing in international affairs ever gets to be called by its right name. In meetings like the ones in East Berlin and in Scheveningen, there would

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appear to be a self-denying ordinance, a secret index of "hard words." Everybody knows them, understands what they mean; but they could, if spoken openly, upset the arranged harmony.

Thus, when Günter Grass enters a protest against repression in Poland he feels obliged to connect it immediately with a protest against the Turkish military régime. Well and good. But then that main spokesman of the *DDR*, Hermann Kant, rises to reject the comparison, to defend the peaceful objectives of Poland's progressive martial law, to insist on the exclusive dangers to peace from "the Right", from the fascists, from the enemies of the Soviet Union's camp of peace. Grass is not exactly silent on any public issue that comes up, but here one does not find him reacting with the same fiery and polemical temperament to which he has accustomed us. Evidently peace among even the most warring conceptions of Peace must be maintained. Coexistence.

My impression is that the German writers and poets and artists are getting into deeper waters than they know. Some have in the past shown some expertise in practical political matters, and even proposed concrete measures for the Willy Brandt era of reforms and *Ostpolitik*. But in this stormy ocean of weapons and throw-loads and defence technology they are obviously all at sea. What remains is rhetorical attempts to express Utopian sentiments: which, when well put, may have some literary merits, as utopians often have, but in the present very ideologised crisis seem either irrelevant or serviceable only to those who want to encourage a dark, romantic spirit of *Angst* in Europe.

STILL, the German-Germans want to go on, meeting soon again in Cologne and/or Sofia, and one wonders how long the travelling caravan can hold up in their carefully cultivated togetherness. As is by now rather well known, the churchmen in the East have a rather different conception of peace from the Party ideologues, and there disagreeable differences are emerging. When *DDR* writers like Stefan Heym and Günter de Bruyn begin to take the struggle for peace so seriously as to criticise "the militarisation of youth" in their own Communist society, which denies any scope for home-grown pacifist sentiments, then one begins to see (as the dialecticians say) "the deeper contradictions."

This certainly was not the original conception of Stephan Hermlin, and of those in the official Party establishment who allowed him to take his unprecedented "private initiative" last year. Perhaps they still are willing to accept these as tolerable side-effects. But there is drama to the dissidence; and they have been here before.

As for the German-German intellectuals and men of letters who have been announcing their love of peace, they have by now convinced all and sundry. As they say, one needs peace to write books, paint pictures, rhyme verses. One suspected as much before one came to East Berlin and Scheveningen, and surely no one needs any further persuasion. Peace, brethren, *is* better than war. If only we could agree on any other thing: any other honestly spoken, clearly worded, mutually acceptable thing!

Latin Learners

West Berlin

THIS PLACE is, of course, an "island" and it has needed no special persuasion in these days that "we are all Falklanders now...." Still, its current preoccupation with Latin America has nothing to do with the altercation in the South Atlantic. Having no power itself the old German capital and half-city has always looked for "spiritual" connections; and sometimes its timing has been a little oddly off. I remember some thirty years ago coming here for a cultural conference, and on that week-end the Korean War broke out. Now the Berliners have been planning for years a Latin American festival, and when it finally takes place the minds of everybody are preoccupied with Argentinian Juntas and Peruvian diplomatic initiatives.

And yet, hasn't this always been the trouble with "Latin America", this European projection of the Iberian and Lusitanian New World? An awareness of the aboriginal America was long ago repressed, and with it most of what followed. We probably can't help seeing it only with our own eyes. Columbus glimpsed the green mountains and the mighty rivers and thought he had located the Biblical Paradise. How many searched here for El Dorado (as in V. S. Naipaul's chronicle of the adventure)? Thomas More was supposed to have read about the Inca state before his inspiration of King Utopus's utopian isle. Some European intellectuals still look for their ideal Revolution north of the Sierra Maestre or west of the Andes.

No doubt about it, this ethnocentric focus has deeply upset the Latin American cultures, never evaluated for themselves in their own terms, always echoes of echoes. Their question, as these days of the Berlin "Latin American" festival have again underlined, is: Who, then, are we? Or: how do we find ourselves?

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The long week-end was dominated by the presence of that distinguished Mexican poet and essayist, Octavio Paz, who is evidently as much translated here into German as in France and the English-reading world. On one fine sunny day I found the Berlin *Stadtbibliothek* crowded with some eight hundred young people, listening all afternoon and evening to readings and round-table discussions. A touching occasion, especially when one considers how recondite some of the biographical and topical illusions are. More accessible, no doubt, is the social radicalism of Mario Vargas Llosa's vision, with novels about revolts and other Brazilian millenarian longings. Still, he was able to charm and instruct with talks about Gustave Flaubert and William Faulkner, and for a moment one could think that the long-awaited "cultural bridge" had been constructed or, perhaps, that there was some reality in the notion of "world literature."

How popular are they in their own native lands? Not very. They may be respected, admired, honoured; but not more. Either they are "too revolutionary" and literary critics attack them for being so political; or they are not revolutionary enough, for somehow in all their writings there emerges a critical picture of the compulsive narrowness of Latin political passions. I have been looking through the numbers of *Vuelta*, the monthly which Octavio Paz has been editing in Mexico for the last five years or so. For all its opposition to the Somoza tyranny, it is clear that the developing events in Nicaragua under the Sandinista régime leave something to be desired—what can writers say when new censors replace the old, when the poor still have no say in running their own lives, when Indian settlements are violently uprooted, when the bitterly disappointed begin to take refuge in Costa Rica, Honduras, Panama, and Mexico? One only hopes that it is not merely presented as an "old European story"; their tragedies must come to be seen as their own.

I wonder whether the Brazilian writer Darsy Ribeiro, a figure of many talents, can for very much longer hold fast to his "happy dream" that all of Latin America should become a kind of greater Cuba. Here in Europe he is at least being told that not only is there in and out of Castro's infamous prisons a representative cross-section of some of the best émigré writers who had escaped from reactionary right-wing dictatorships, but the best of the Cubans themselves, e.g. Armando Valladares, Reinaldo Arenas. But to judge from the recent Latin books on South American politics available here during Festival week, the ideological blinkers about the new repressiveness remain formidable. Even the most Left-oriented of the local German literati—say, the editors of journals like *Kursbuch* and *Transatlantik* (both inspired by Hans Magnus Enzensberger) have long since given up being frustrated by such tabus.

If the Berlin Festival had a lesson, it was in my view that the literary encounter is easier and more successful than the political engagement. In an article in *Vuelta* the novelist Ernesto Sábato takes up the problem of the Argentine population's European roots, and its persistent difficulties with democracy and representative institutions. As he remarks, "... Peron, for example, is incomprehensible to the European and American sociologists; he defies analysis, remains a closed book...." Part of the problem is surely that those fateful ideological categories of "Left" and "Right" which mean so little and confound so much in the Western world have been exported everywhere; and when they come back to us from Buenos Aires and Santiago, murky and misleading, shedding no light and many ambiguities, it only serves us right.

F.B.

London Commentary

The Pope's Pastorale

By Edward Pearce

It has been visiting time in Britain: first Horowitz, then the Pope. At the double risk of being eliminated from the human race by a coven of critics and subjected to anathema, this writer wasn't wild about either. At the same time we have been preoccupied with pooled press despatches from Goose Green, Port Darwin, and the mountains above Port Stanley. Old-fashioned heroism has come back into fashion again so that most of us have been listening to the radio or viewing TV with half-an-eye for the news flash which would bring a report straightforwardly good or bad—something of theirs hit, or something of ours. There are no complications of the soul here today. The attitude of the generality who do not write letters to *The Guardian* has been one of nervous elation, minding our losses but not giving a bone button for world opinion.

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Yet oddly for one of the two crucial weeks the news was counterpointed by the doings of a positive emblem of world opinion, Pope John Paul II. The official reaction in the media (like the critical—if that is the word—response to Vladimir Horowitz's concert) has been one of orchestrated ecstasy. Just as the music critics were so honoured into servility that the old poseur should come and play piano to us for the first time in about thirty years, they declined to acknowledge that this Polish expatriate managed to make Chopin sound ugly and played the Schumann *Kinderszenen* as if it were a milk train pausing between stops to pick up the driver's friends, so no one dared to observe that that other expatriate spoke words of sturdy banality throughout. But lack of enthusiasm is more for the event than the man.

There are lots of reasons why the Pope should be esteemed and his visit welcomed. He is visibly—in face and smile—a good man. So was poor, spindly, asthmatic, Italian Paul VI, a man too shy ever to be appreciated by the broad public. But "*Il Polacco*", as he was hailed on election by the Roman crowd, has the gift of touch, the means of communicating personal goodness in little things. But one pulls up short. There has been altogether so much gush and sycophancy on this visit, so much reverential sports commentary, that one makes it a point of honour not to be drawn down a mill-race flecked with clichés and lost judgment.

The Pope is a splendid man but there was far, far too much of him. The same rally and/or open-air mass seemed to be being celebrated on TV several times each day. The view of the Pope as a kind of belated fifth Beatle is profoundly unjust to Karol Wojtyla. But the organisers, the cashers-in, the sellers of tin trays, the authors of dreadful rubber-necking promotional books, chose to make him just that. But quite as bad in a different way were the Anglicans (episcopalians) whose humility passes all reason and left self-respect a long way back.

In the context of England (and I do mean England) there were two quite separate operations going on. The Roman Catholics here were celebrating the arrival for the first time ever of the supreme pontiff of their church. Even though there is a fascinating theological war being fought among English Catholics between their own factions of traditionalists and liberal churchmen, it was the most natural thing in the world for them to sink dispute (and in the case of many, real unhappiness about the theological position of this Pope) and to come to pray and cheer.

FOR THE DOMINANT FACTION in Anglicanism—the High Church Anglo-Catholics, hanging on by every shred of canonical authority they can to the notion of their sect as "apostolic" and their clergy not as "ministers of religion" but priests—the Pope is perceived as a master to a degree which must be profoundly embarrassing to the head of a church, one of whose infallible predecessors solemnly pronounced the Anglican orders invalid.

Quite simply it is fine for the Catholics to make a great fest for their Pope. It is excellent good manners and civility between believers for the Nonconformists and the Jews to welcome him. But the Anglican hierarchy is as dodgy and dubious in its motives as the untrusted, unloved, accommodation-seeking British Foreign Office.

There is a streak of servility and worse in the High Church passion for Church unity. (That prince among political asses and theology-fanciers, Lord Halifax, once rated it more important than his official duties as Foreign Secretary.) People who love a distant beloved in another country are not terribly attractive especially when so often they appear to be attracted by that beloved's authoritarian qualities. The High Anglicans particularly admire John Paul for precisely the reasons which make liberal Roman Catholics uneasy about him. The Polish Pope is the product of the wary coexistence of Polish communism and Polish catholicism. Understandably the sort of door-opening liberalism which has been practised by the Roman Catholics of Holland and Britain was never thinkable to the Cardinal of Cracow, watchful as he had to be of the Party's pseudo-Catholic front organisations. The liberalising of an autocratic church could not logically take place inside a totalitarian state.

Stepping out from this special Polish context, the Pope has seemed to many Western liberal Catholics to be tinged with Counter-Reformation thinking. And they, the Catholics, are, paradoxically, much more apprehensive of this than Anglican fellow-travellers. I am not speaking now of radical wild men or of the political clergy, but of temperate Roman Catholic liberals like David Lodge who, in the admirable novel *How Far Can You Go?*, charted the change of faith in a group of young Catholics over thirty years from the superstitious awe of Pius XII's time to the freedom and the muddle, which is the mild price of freedom, to be found in the same people, choosing and thinking for themselves. Ironically, just as the High Anglicans hunger and thirst to be acknowledged as kosher (that can't be quite the right word) priests, so Mr Lodge's group and those they stood for in real life were coming close to the very Protestant notion of "the priesthood of every true believer." There are indeed some notable cross-handed duets being played here.

The Church created at the Counter-Reformation by Gianpietro Caraffa (like the ugly absolutism celebrated by Hilaire Belloc) has more Catholic critics, willing to hit it harder, than it has

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among Anglicans, who (having long played all sorts of make-believe games in the wide free plains created by Erastianism and the habit of free speech) are neglectful of their blessings. There is something rather spaniel-like about the Anglicans, desperate for so much more than civility and affection between churches, nagging on about the mission of Augustine, the authority of Hildebrand and Innocent III, and all that. Not only do they lack a decent self-respect and show a depressing passion to subordinate themselves, logically their position implies a disbelief in their own authenticity which in the Church of Cranmer, Latimer, Andrewes, Donne and Hooker is rather pathetic.

ONE ASPECT of their impulse for the distant beloved might be compared with the great "unity of Europe." For while membership of the Common Market conferred few benefits on the citizenry, unless a monumental annual subscription to a dear food club is thought good for us, it was wonderful for the Foreign Office. An organisation demonstrably overmanned, and with a shrivelled function in the world, suddenly found a reason for surviving and burgeoning; the Carlton Terrace bureaucracy, not that in Brussels, has always been the one to watch! In a very similar way the Ministers of the Anglican Church want (some of them) very badly to be invested with the status of priest, and in their inner hearts they go along with Pope Leo XIII in rejecting the validity of their own orders. They want to belong to something big and international. They are more moved by *amour propre* and the seductive nature of power than is altogether seemly. Catholic priests used to have great political power (in the loose sense of being obeyed) in the name of "spiritual authority." Anglican clergy never have, thank God; and an element of professional jealousy, an itch to hear the words "Yes, Father", is not the least of the low motives which seem to me to lie behind current high purposes.

And yet they have left it very late. The present Pope may take a hard line on certain issues like abortion and may have laid up enemies on earth as the entrencher of Pope Paul's *Humanae Vitae*; he may have scragged Küng and Schillebeeckx, theologians he seems to regard as near-agnostics, but the broad liberalising of his Church is not going to be undone. Those who dream of triumphalism, of the ecclesiastical *Führerprinzip*, will not find it again outside of Ecône, the bunker of Monsignor Lefebvre (that absolutist sweetly hoist with the petard of absolutism) . . . and perhaps in Ireland.

Treading as gently as I may among other people's convictions, I have the impression that Roman Catholics delight in the private liberties they have discovered. Like the kingdom of his most Catholic Majesty the King of Spain, their state has been quite transformed and is not going back to the condition dreamed of by Blas Pinar or Millans del Bosch. Leave it to a faction of day-dreaming Anglicans to long for a *Guardia Civil* of a priesthood.

There are losses of course (losses, for that matter, to the Anglicans) in a liturgy and a bible junked for substitutes which seem to have been designed for wooden ears by wooden fingers. It is not at all clear that the best way of letting in the light was to smash the stained glass. There are also absurdities, for some Catholic theologians appear able to join hands with Broad Church Anglicans in ecumenical rejection of religious belief. But anything is a fit price to pay for the ending of awe and submission in men capable of free intelligence.

Even the "pop star" aspect of the Papal visit signifies something. Was this Pope, a highly intelligent and attractive theological conservative, greeted for what he was, for what he thought, or for who he was? Respectfully I would suggest that most of the authority of the tiara derives now from the quality of the man who wears it. By common consent Wojtyla is a dazzler of a personality, and even *his* crowds were disappointing for an episode of church history given super-hype treatment. What would have happened for poor, melancholy, unlucky Luciano who wrote dialogues to Pinocchio? And if this man can only temper the Catholic reformation, what chance for the next curial bureaucrat in the job? Perhaps something more like the diaphanous authority of the Secretary-General to the United Nations! When you think about it, the question—how much charisma has the Pope?—may come to seem more cruel than the earlier one which Stalin asked about that dignitary and his divisions.

IRONICALLY, the absence of any but the most notional "No-Popery" protest and the general welcome given by the British to this Pope is a reflection, like so much else in religion, of politics.

I would want to argue strenuously that anti-papalism has historically been an aspect of the anarchic disposition of the English in favour of personal freedom. The English are not deeply religious, though (in George Orwell's phrase) they have "a deep tinge of Christian feeling." As long as the Roman Church was perceptibly a spiritual Star Chamber, it was feared and hated. There is a parallel between the failure of Counter-Reformation Catholicism in England and the later failure there of the Marxist followers of Lenin and Stalin. Much has been written about the persecution of Catholics. But the instinct which in the 16th century saw the likes of Father Robert Parsons and Cardinal Allen as "enemy agents" was in a way

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perfectly sound; for this was an enemy operating the *index librorum prohibitorum*, the Holy Office and its fires, a burner of books and men. Of course we were against it! By 200 years we anticipated Pombal, Voltaire, Joseph II and all the forces which in the Catholic world in the 18th and 19th centuries were to express themselves as anticlericalism.

For long after it relinquished, or was relieved of, its direct powers to misgovern, the fingers of the Church still itched for raw temporal power. There are few stories more melancholy than that of Mastai-Ferretti (Pius IX) in the long sulk and self-immuration which followed the destruction of his temporal powers begun by that hero of the English and notable anticlerical, Giuseppe Garibaldi. Pius IX was reduced by the loss of most of the Papal states to proclaim his infallibility, calling in, as it were, the next world to redress the balance of this. The effect of Vatican 2, whatever eccentricities it may have prompted, was to break forever the resentful antiquarian hold of what might be called the Counter-Risorgimento, the taste of the Church for chic reaction and for all-round submissiveness among its faithful.

Perhaps one is too optimistic but the preposterous world of Evelyn Waugh's Mr Crouchback, still in distress over the usurpation of the House of Savoy, is lost and Catholics seem to think it well lost. Imperfectly and with many stumbles, the Catholic church seems to be a late convert to English liberalism. There were thus no significant protests against the Pope's visit to this country, for the substance of what had made Catholicism politically objectionable to us has gone into irreversible decline.

So the crowds turned out: at Wembley (newly recovered from the replay of the FA Soccer Cup), at Coventry, York, Manchester, tumbledown Liverpool, and most notably at Belahouston Park in Scotland, where the crowd of the faithful gave every indication of cheering the Pope without bothering to listen to him. Indeed the phenomenon did have affinities with a Pop concert. Where religious devotion began and coming to see the great star left off who shall say? But it was all very fitting that the Roman Catholics of this country registered their affection. Even though it appears that expectations of the size of crowds were much too high, the delight was real enough.

IRONICALLY, although the Pope dropped a great many hints about the iniquity of war, and by implication the wrongness of our dusting-over of the Argentinians, it had exactly no effect, either on the crowds or on Mrs Thatcher, who tactfully avoided a meeting and went on dusting.

Even more ironically Major Keble, who following the death in action of Colonel "H" Jones, was in temporary command of the Second Parachute regiment and who accepted Argentinian surrender at Goose Green, is a devout Roman Catholic. While the Pope was deploring (eloquently), the army was fighting (superlatively), and the Major countersigned. It is an Erastian world after all. English Roman Catholics tend, on balance, to be every last little bit as nationalistic and English as the rest of us. As a source of direct political authority the heir of Innocent III has about as much direct authority as Señor Perez de Cuellar, which suits us admirably.

A Chip off the Block

A spelk's half-lost under the skin
like the vague support
in an unlit paper lantern.

I jab with the needle, tattooing nothing
until my nail, as broad as a shovel,
forces out the jagged wedge—

no light, no image, wooden;
every writer's nightmare.
Enough to make my finger cry.

David Sweetman

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A Magical Mish-Mash

Esoteric & Conspiratorial Myths—By PETER PARTNER

I USED TO ADMIRE my Uncle Walter because his job with the Great Western Railway led him to walk up and down the platform of Paddington Station in a beautiful tall silk hat—and because he used to tell me that the stones of the Great Pyramid of Egypt prove that the British are the Lost Tribe of Israel. How could the measurements of an ancient monument give the man with a tape measure insight into the deepest processes of human history? History not only of the Bible (which at least mentions the Ancient Egyptians) but of the Anglo-Saxons (who belonged to quite different times and places). . . . And, indeed, how could the Pyramids affect my destiny, for I belonged to the Anglo-Saxon tribe just as surely as Uncle Walter? His possession of all this hidden knowledge—the word "esoteric" was then unknown to me—worried and disturbed me.

Today, 50 years later, Uncle Walter and his silk hat are no more. For many years I gave no more thought to his visions. But the voices of the Pyramidologists are still to be heard in the land, and by a roundabout route which has led me through the East, though not past the Pyramids, I have again come to ask questions about their mysteries.

I have just completed a book on the Templars and their myth. The medieval Knights Templar were an Order of soldier-monks, bound by religious vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, and engaged in religious war in Palestine. After the Muslims had finally driven the Crusaders from the Holy Land the Templars became, on their return to the West, the apparently innocent victims of a campaign of slander and persecution. The French King charged them with "heresy" and with "apostasy from the Christian faith." After this long lapse of time the records are hard to interpret, and it is not definitely established whether the accusations were true or not. But after a short period of crisis (1307–1312) in which many Templars were cruelly tortured under examination, and some burned to death, the Templar Order was dissolved for ever.

Modern scholars have hesitated to come to a definite conclusion about the Templar trials. Fanaticism and greed (for the Templars were thought by contemporaries to have been immensely rich) played a part in stimulating their accusers. Some historians think that the French monarchy simply trumped up the charges in order to fill its empty coffers; others have allowed the possibility of serious irregularities having occurred in the Order.[1] If we take the worst case, and assume the charges against them to have been well-founded, we can still conclude very little about the Templar heresy. The Templars were a military *corps d'élite* which perhaps lost its faith and its nerve in the Palestinian defeats. Some or (less likely) all its members may have fallen into some sort of superstitious devil-worship. The nature of that devil-worship, if it ever existed, is profoundly obscure.

THE TEMPLAR HERESY is unlikely to have been intellectual or learned in origin, as modern study of their organisation has shown that most Templars were illiterate. The way in which the accusations were framed implies that the Templars acquired their wicked ways in the Holy Land, but this is questionable. Like other Crusaders, the Templars were likely to have been entirely ignorant about Muslim customs and religion. They were taxed with the adoration of a heathen image called a "Baphomet" or "Muhammad", but the term itself indicates the ignorance of the people who brought the charges. It is very unlikely that the Templars picked up in the East the custom of worshipping such an image, because of all religions Islam is the most uncompromising in its prohibition of the worship of any but the one

[1] The Templar case has been recently examined in Malcolm Barber, *The Trial of the Templars* (Cambridge University Press, 1978) and in *The Knights Templar*. By STEPHEN HOWARTH. Collins, £9·95.

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God, Allah. Muslims were often called "idolaters" by medieval Catholics; but the word was wrongly and ignorantly applied, and can fairly be called a smear. Neither Muslims nor even the heretical religions on the fringe of Islam would have worshipped a "Baphomet."

Perhaps the idea came from Western heresies, though even this is hard to prove. Sects like the Albigensians of southern France knew no such idol-worship. A few heretics of the time were influenced by Jewish or Balkan mysticism, and may perhaps be said to have had a vaguely "Eastern" tinge. But the thing remains deeply obscure, perhaps because the heresy of the Templars never existed save in the minds of their Inquisitors.

MANY CURIOUS PEOPLE have found it impossible to accept such scepticism about Templar guilt. The Templar case has for over two centuries aroused interest far outside the ranks of academic historians, and a version of the Templar heresy has been concocted which professes to supply all the gaps in the story. According to these writers, who have been numerous from the early 19th century onwards, the Templars were not only guilty of the charges brought against them, but possessed knowledge and doctrine far more disturbing to the Christian faith than the Inquisitors ever suspected. The Templars, in their view, were the custodians of the deepest secrets of the medieval Manichee, handed down from the Gnostics of the early Christian period. They were not superstitious monks but wise and prescient initiates, whose doctrines have still not been fully understood or used by mankind. They were not ignorant illiterates but mighty prophets, seers blest, the masters of divine illumination and wisdom.

There is more poetry than logic in this argument, which was summarily dealt with a century-and-a-half ago by the English essayist Thomas De Quincey. At ten years of age he had met with the myth of the secret societies which had supposedly handed down their Gnostic secrets from one coven to another, over a period of a couple of millennia. Young De Quincey's reasoning powers were quite adequate to resolve the matter (and he treated his informants with more firmness than I treated my Uncle Walter). He was struck by the

> "mysteriousness to me of men becoming partners (and by no means sleeping partners) in a society of which they had never heard; or, again, of one fellow standing at the beginning of a century, and stretching out his hand towards another fellow standing at the end of it, without either having known of the other's existence."

The argument of an historical chain of secret societies is simply incredible, but (as De Quincey

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remarked) the highest form of the incredible is for some people the initial form of the credible.

AN EXPLANATION for the Gnostic Templars is not hard to find, although few have had the patience to work it out in detail. The concept grew out of the parables of 18th-century Freemasonry. Its first home was among the German Freemason nobles, who had a bottomless appetite for theatrical mumbo-jumbo; its component parts were manufactured at one time or another by the "Illuminist" adherents of various forms of theosophy. In its pursuit they fabricated pseudo-medieval documents. Some luridly imaginative parts of the myth, such as that the Templars were a secret revolutionary society of subversive magicians, or that they were closely connected with the Holy Grail, owe their origin to the propagandist war between radicals and conservatives at the time of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars.

The Templar myth was originally connected with rites which were actually "worked" or performed in the Masonic lodges, and some lodges continue to follow such practices to the present day; but, when it left orthodox Freemasonry, Templarism assumed a more literary character. With the boom in occultism and theosophy which occurred in the second half of the 19th century, it was taken up by some self-styled magi. The late Aleister Crowley incorporated the Templar Myth into the "Order of the Eastern Temple"; the interests of this society lay largely in sexual pathology, and monastic celibates were rather unsuitable figures to have been chosen as its patrons.

IN OUR TIMES Templar hocus-pocus has flourished. The Templars have been credited with the construction of the medieval cathedrals, which they are supposed to have financed with silver which—three centuries before Columbus—they imported from America. Templar skill and wisdom hid the Holy Grail and its treasure in the mysterious Forest of the East. Templar castles, such as Gisors, have been said to have been the operational centres for powerful astrologers; such castles supposedly contained, or still contain, great deposits of Templar wealth. (Gisors was not, as it happens, a Templar castle; but such details do not bother the enthusiast.)

The discovery of buried treasure has been the speciality of many magical experts since the times of Cagliostro in the 18th century, and treasure-trove stories have figured prominently in the Templar myth since its first invention. One, due to Gerard de Sède, the French writer who suspected a great underground Templar centre in the castle of Gisors, represented a still greater treasure to have been concealed in the foothills of the French slopes of the Pyrenees, near the village of Rennes-le-Château (Aude). A British television writer, Henry Lincoln, took up this story; he has produced colourful tales of cryptic treasure-maps based on Poussin pictures, and rich and powerful mystics, the adepts of immemorially ancient secret societies.[2] In the stories of de Sède and Lincoln, as in the original Masonic parables, dubious "medieval" parchments and still more dubious mystical cyphers add to the excitement of the adventure.

These tales have been embroidered for the popular market, but the original inventions are not modern. Most derive from parables, behind which lay the symbolism and religious enthusiasm of people who sought a mystical tradition to supplant what they interpreted as the dying beliefs of orthodox Christianity. One of the strongest needs experienced by this kind of theosophy is for an historical framework which will confer authority on a certain variety of religious wisdom. Both in speculative Freemasonry and in other forms of parallel quasi-religious experience, "tradition" is a key word. To meet this need for a feeling of historical authenticity, all sorts of fictions have been invented, of which the mystical Templars are only one. Mysterious religious institutions, supposed to have existed in the Palestine of the Crusaders, transmitted the Gnostic lore from the ancient world to the Templars and their successors. There is also a link between the Templar myths and the idea of a special "Johannine" revelation, through which the High Initiation of the Ancient Egyptians passed to St John (and not to Jesus) and thence to the modern world. But with the Egyptian High Initiation we are back to the Pyramids, and from the Pyramids the Perennial Philosophy (always waiting to take the unwary journalist for a very long ride) can take us back yet further, to the lost civilisation of Atlantis supposed by many Pyramidologists to lie behind the Egyptian Wisdom. When I reached this point of my enquiries into Templarism and its affiliates, I saw myself, once more eight years old, sitting in my Uncle Walter's flat in Paddington and listening to the mysteries of Pyramid numerology.

THE SECRET TRADITION of hidden knowledge, supposed to derive from wisdom which far preceded the Christian revelation, has existed in roughly its present form since the 18th century. Its greatest organisational triumph was the setting up of the Freemason lodges at that period. Freemasonry was, essentially, popularised theosophy.

[2] See *The Holy Blood and The Holy Grail*. By MICHAEL BAIGENT, RICHARD LEIGH and HENRY LINCOLN. Jonathan Cape, £8.95.

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But the doctrine was diluted in that most of the lodges (in this country at least) kept the religious and mystical elements in the craft at a safe distance. The Freemason Secret restricted the audience to the lodges, so that there was never any question of setting up a new popular religion. Freemasonry has acted as a nursery for the Secret Tradition rather than as its vehicle. But the secrecy of its proceedings has not been copied by everyone. Some of these secrets might be said to have been Masonic, others not; but there have always been people willing to commit the Eternal Secrets to the printing press.

The history of the popularisation of theosophical doctrines is long and complicated, but it can be argued that there was a great watershed in the mid-19th century. Before that time the various schools of esoteric knowledge were quite separate and distinct: they remain so for people who are sufficiently instructed. But the writers of the Romantic school started in the 1830s to treat the hidden knowledge in a much more general way, and to merge the various streams of the theosophical tradition into a single Occult river. Possibly one reason for this was that a simplified doctrine was more saleable on the popular market, but this was not the only factor; for example, the Romantic Socialists wanted their own brand of esotericism. Whatever the reasons, the movement brought matters which had previously seemed rather erudite and obscure to a large popular audience.

The key writer was a talented but wayward French Abbé, Alphonse Louis Constant, who wrote under the name of "Eliphas Lévi." Constant brought together the Templars and the Tarot cards, Egyptology and Cabbala, Druids and Grail knights, and many other mythical and magical monsters, in a single magical mish-mash. He was one of the first widely-read authors to treat "the Occult" as a single category.[3]

Constant was a participant in the Revolution of 1848 and a subject of the conspiratorial Napoleon III. Not surprisingly, conspiracy theory plays quite a large part in his books, as it does in all the subsequent esoteric popular literature. Not that conspiracy theory was new to esotericism in 1848. The conspiracy fears, theories and manias which have been so prominent in modern political consciousness have had an esoteric background from 1789 onwards. The idea of revolution is inseparable from that of conspiracy, and from the French Revolution onwards counter-revolutionary writers have disseminated the idea that revolutions are engineered by magician-plotters.

The original theory was that the French Revolution had been caused by the Freemasons, and that the wicked cells of mystical conspirators had tentacles which reached far back into history, through Cromwell (who was represented as having been a notable magician) to the Templars and so back through the medieval Manichees. The conservative propagandists—of whom the most important were a French Jesuit, Barruel, and a German orientalist, Hammer—stood the Secret Tradition on its head. The people who had been represented by the theosophists as a secret succession of benign sages were turned by the conservatives into a vast historical conspiracy of magical, antichristian monsters.

THE LATER HISTORY of esoteric conspiracy theory is interesting, but at times alarming. In the esoteric world things can easily turn into their opposites. Later popularisers of the Occult got hold of the anti-Masonic fantasies and conspiracy theories of the French Revolutionary period and turned them into new magical fairy-tales with a high entertainment value. Satanism was by this time becoming fashionable, and people who played with such ideas could get a cheap and saleable thrill out of the secret society myths. But there are some very sinister byways in the history of these fantasies.

[3] Colin Wilson, for example, a few years ago published a book entitled *The Occult*; a century and a half ago the term would have been meaningless.

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One of these leads to the "Jewish-Masonic plot" theory, the fabrication of a story about plans for Jewish world-domination which are conceived by evil Jewish plotters and executed by godless Freemasons. On the whole the theosophist fantasies—even the Satanist ones—were relatively innocent, but the evil fable of the so-called *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was used by the Nazis and other such people, and is a warning of the way in which magical fantasies can be twisted for wicked purposes. It is rather worrying that although they describe it as "one of the single most infamous documents of the 20th century", the authors of *The Holy Blood and The Holy Grail* suggest that there is *some* truth in or behind the *Protocols*. This is an unfortunate example of the way in which occultist popularisers like to imply that where there is a mystery there is a truth, though a truth understood only by the elect.

THE PSYCHOLOGY of the Marvellous is a subject which would keep a lot of psychiatrists, sociologists and Comparative Literature professors in business together for years; its systematic study has hardly been attempted. One element in esoteric psychology emerges strongly from the history of the Templar myth, and it seems to me so generally undervalued that it is worth treating in isolation from the others. This is the way in which popular esotericism, the Secret Tradition divulged to a wide public, has always been used to mock the current orthodoxies.

The pioneer model for this was 18th-century Freemasonry, whose rites and ideas always bore a very ambiguous and ultimately a very threatening relationship to orthodox religious belief. The Freemasons professed to respect religious belief, and did not directly challenge it. But the rites of Freemasonry, though not a conscious parody of Christian rites, were a disturbing parallel to them. It was said of the early Freemasons that they wanted to "*faire la chapelle*", which has the meaning of children playing "at church", just as they play "at doctors." The mockery of established values, conducted in a gentle and indirect way, was an important aspect of early Freemasonry. The ironic style of these Masons can be compared with that of their great contemporary, Laurence Sterne, the author of *Tristram Shandy*. It was no accident that Christoph Bode, who translated Sterne into German, was also one of the main leaders of mystical Freemasonry in Germany.

In the 18th century esotericism tended to mock at established religion; in the 19th century it began to mock the new god of Science. The so-called 19th-century Magical Revival was contemporary with the high tide of Darwinism. Occultists like Constant in France and Bulwer Lytton in this country tried (as Mesmer had tried in the preceding century) to dress up their doctrines in a "scientific" form whose effect was really to make fun of science. Constant made an elaborate parade of scientific learning, but he was a poet with no scientific knowledge at all, except what he had cribbed from the crazy Polish polymath, Hoene-Wronski. Constant's "science" is a mere game in which he is teasing the scientific establishment. How annoying he managed to be can be seen even today, in the pages devoted to Constant by the present holder of the Wykeham Chair of Logic in the University of Oxford in his recent book on the card game of Tarot.[4] The contemptuous fury which Constant's text can still inspire in Michael Dummett shows how provoking the esotericists can be to the academics, when they deign to take any notice of them.

In the past half-century the god of natural science has to some extent been abandoned in favour of the god of social science; and the esotericists seem to have changed their target to the social and literary historians. Esoteric empire-building has constructed a huge body of pseudo-historical "hidden" knowledge, dealing with the Pyramids, the Druids, the Templars, the mystical secret societies, Grail-knights, cathedral-builders, the Holy Shroud, Atlantis. The outward form of these books is straight-faced, but in effect they are making fun of academic history, just as the other branches of esotericism which expound parapsychology, alchemical revival and similar marvels are making fun of the orthodox natural sciences.

Perhaps we have allowed a mandarin culture to develop in which the general public finds academic knowledge either boring or incomprehensible. It is true that many talented writers have made great efforts to popularise this knowledge, but their success is never going to be complete. In consequence an anti-élitist élitism has grown up which uses esotericism as its pretext. There is a big readership for books whose apparent access to hidden (but easily comprehensible) knowledge enables them to make fools of the professors. Moreover, the diffusion of esoteric doctrine is not only by means of the printing press; the media are quite willing to take part. For example, Henry Lincoln, who is one of the main promoters of an esoteric view of history, made his name on televised history programmes. Popular sympathy always tends to go to the enthusiast against the professional. In France there have been TV confrontations between the exponents of mystical Templarism and the University medievalists, in which the latter had the worst of it. The funnies are often more fun than the heavies.

[4] Michael Dummett, *The Game of Tarot: from Ferrara to Salt Lake City* (Duckworth, 1980).

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SOME PEOPLE HAVE TRIED to work out the characteristics of the typical reader of the esoteric books published at the lower end of the market. It has been said that this reader is likely to want to feel learned and well-informed, although his own intellectual attainments may be modest. He has a narcissistic wish to prove his superiority to ordinary people, which he satisfies by getting hold of supposedly secret information. The literature which he reads has to be arranged in an episodic and easily digestible form, neither too heavy, nor too closely argued. There is going to be an overlap between such people and the devotees of the astrology columns. The German sociologist Theodor Adorno, when he went to the United States as a refugee from Nazi persecution, tried to identify in American society the type of "authoritarian personality" which had been characteristic of the Nazi supporters in Germany. Fairly or unfairly, he suggested that the kind of people who patronised popular astrology were among those who were likely to possess an authoritarian personality.

It would be monstrous to imply that esoteric writers and readers are all in some generalised sense "authoritarian." On the other hand, the essence of the whole esoteric point of view is conservative, because of its appeal to authority through tradition. The emphasis on authority is especially sharp in those esoteric authors who refuse to take any account of non-esoteric learning, which they stigmatise as "official" or "orthodox." An example is the wholesale condemnation of all "orthodox" Egyptology by some of the Pyramidologists, who will allow no one who fails to understand their "unified field" theory of Ancient Egypt any standing in the matter at all. The idea that there is such a thing as "official" or orthodox learning is typical of one of the main weaknesses of esoteric thought, the inability to take account of the variety and diversity of human opinion. The notion that orthodox Egyptologists are engaged in a gigantic conspiracy to defraud and mislead the world about the Ancient Egyptians is, when one considers it, grotesque. Anyone who has spent a couple of hours listening to the arguments of University teachers in a seminar (whether about Egyptology or Chaucer) will find the idea of such a conspiracy utterly implausible.

WITH CONSPIRACY we are back to one of the fundamental traits of esoteric psychology. The typical esoteric reader is likely to get a pleasurable thrill from the mock fear of supposed conspiracies which his superior knowledge enables him to identify and, if necessary, to frustrate. Alternatively, he may get some satisfaction from the feeling that he is an honorary member of an immemorial conspiracy of benevolent magi, who transmit to the world a true understanding of the nature of things. Put in this way, the concept may seem childish. But the way in which conspiracy has been handled by novelists from, say, John Buchan to Thomas Pynchon suggests that plenty of readers are willing to think like this. The esoteric perception of conspiracies is a spiritualised version of the current spy mania. Like fascination with spies in high places, it is a kind of inverted élitism which depends on the popularisation of knowledge about the plottings of important people.

The esoteric myths belong, eventually, either to religion or to poetry. They may have valuable and profound things to tell us: it would be foolish to decry them all as childish and silly. But, though we sometimes half-believe them as we read them, they remain parables and not histories. Coleridge, who thought about these things as profoundly as anyone, pointed out that although our emotional nature calls for myth in a way which cannot be denied, what he called Good Sense or Sanity must always restrict the meaning of the parables.

There may be a hidden wisdom, but it concerns our moral lives and not the external world which we inhabit. So long as the parables are as innocent as those of most of the theosophists, some confusion between the real and the moral world does not matter. It is only when the myths take mon-

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strous forms like the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* that they become dangerous. On the other hand, no rational person can repress a certain irritation when he is assured that a fairy-tale is the same thing as a history. Just as the infant Thomas De Quincey was fascinated by the lady who told him about the Great Chain of Secret Societies, but was impatient with her logic, so I listened with doubtful amazement to my Uncle Walter when he told me about the secrets of the Great Pyramid. The charm of the myth is strong, but Good Sense can undo the spell.

Who is Moderate, What is Extreme?

Between Left & Right—By ANTONY FLEW

"EXTREMISM in the defence of liberty is no vice.... Moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue." These words were spoken by US Senator Barry Goldwater, accepting the presidential nomination of the Republican Party at the 1964 Convention. So the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the rest of the Democratic media establishment pounced upon them as a perennially quotable expression of dangerous, almost lunatic, right-wing fanaticism. If the very same words had been uttered first (as they easily could have been) not by a Conservative but by a member of the liberal Kennedy clan, they would have been recognised everywhere as the plain (although now uncommon) common sense which they are; and, naturally, hailed thereafter as an eloquent statement of authentic New Frontier idealism. In Britain, too, we might in consequence have been spared an intolerable deal of confused and confusing abstract talk about moderation and extremism—talk which assumes that it makes clear sense to describe someone as either a moderate or an extremist, without indicating what substantive commitments these two adjectives are supposed to qualify. (How about "VOTE SLIGHTLY!" and "VOTE VERY!" as rival election cries?)

One thing wrong with *Left, Right: The March of Political Extremism in Britain*[1] is that neither the author, John Tomlinson, nor even Jo Grimond in his Foreword, takes this simple and fundamental point. What really they are concerned about, and certainly with very good reason, is people who, whether in their own clear intentions or through the eventual effects of some favoured policies, are enemies of liberal democracy. But they insist on labelling all and only such witting or unwitting opponents "extremists", without prefix or suffix. They thus become inclined indiscriminately to regard as inimical anyone standing at or near a limiting extreme along any dimension of political disagreement whatsoever.

It is unfortunate too that they make nothing of the contrast between witting (or subjective) and unwitting (objective) opposition—a contrast crucial for understanding how, with relatively few witting enemies, liberal democracy in Britain is now threatened by an enormous danger. The key point which has, of course, to be argued is that the traditional policies of one of our two previously alternating parties of government must, if pushed to extremes, undermine the foundations of an open society and a pluralist polity. This can be true (and I believe is) although very few who support that party, if not always those distinctive policies, do in fact harbour such hostile intentions. Nevertheless, policies will have the effects which they will have, quite irrespective of the intentions both of those who implement them and of those who, however indirectly or uncomprehendingly, support the implementers.

John Tomlinson goes on to compound his perverse insistence upon employing the un-nouned adjective "extremist" (rather than some more complete and appropriate description) by an equally systematic failure to think before applying the expressions "left-wing" and "right-wing." He thus contrives to link the Freedom Association, which might fairly be accused of an unvicious "extremism in the defence of liberty", with various other organisations which, sometimes with almost equal perversity, he sees as treading in the steps of Italian Fascism or German National Socialism. For these are all by custom, and quite uncritically, accounted "right-wing" or "extreme right-wing."

Yet if we are to continue using such expressions, and avoid tripping ourselves up, we must surely allow for more than a single—shall we say?—semi-circle of disagreement. Given a shared and overriding interest in defending and extending liberal democracy, we shall have to put all the divided opposition on the same side and at the same extreme. In any case since the particular semi-

[1] *Left, Right: The March of Political Extremism in Britain*. By JOHN TOMLINSON. John Calder, £4.95; Riverrun Press, $10.95.

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circle in which the Freedom Association and the Selsdon Group are seated on the Far Right is that of more or less "totalitarian" state ownership and control, both the Marxists-Leninists and the National Socialists must be put down as (sometimes) feuding fractions of the Extreme Left.

Tomlinson instead presents a conventionally centrist picture in which chapters of exactly equal length are devoted first to "The Right" and then to "The Left." A framework of this kind might, some 40 or 50 years ago, have fitted Weimar Germany tolerably well; for, at times, the *KPD* and the *NSDAP* were perhaps roughly comparable forces. But it would be grotesque to suggest that the UK's National Front has ever anywhere had influence comparable to that exercised today by the Militant Tendency upon the Labour Party organisation, or by the Communist Party of Great Britain upon the whole labour movement. Where, for instance, can we find the National Front equivalent of that 10% of all top trade-union officials which *The Economist* has identified as carrying Communist Party cards?

Tomlinson (who served as PPS to Harold Wilson and was a junior minister in the Callaghan Labour government) is as reluctant as either of his two former Leaders to recognise and admit how far the rot in the Labour Party has gone; and as eager to pretend that the Conservative Party is similarly, if not more, afflicted.[2] Certainly Tomlinson loves to tell of two or three "neo-Nazis" who were once Tory parliamentary candidates, while straining to avert his eyes from those very many present and past Labour MPs (and members of the National Executive Committee) who can be distinguished from Communists only, if at all, by their closest friends. He does just mention the old list of proscribed organisations; but he says that it "fell into disuse in 1973." In fact the positive decision to abandon it (taken by the 1973 Conference) was a major landmark on the Long March of the Labour Left. Most revealing of all is Tomlinson's bibliography: this lists ten items under "The Right" against only two under "The Left" (while neither here nor in the text is there a single reference to any of the abundant documentation compiled by the Social Democratic Alliance).

WHAT TOMLINSON'S BOOK does not provide is any account of the rise in the Labour Party of those subjective (or objective) enemies of liberal democracy who are not, or are not openly, members of any other political organisation. One consequence is that he cannot begin to illuminate the question why the resistance of the "moderates" or of the "Centre-Right" has been, and remains, half-hearted and ineffectual.

Blake Baker's *The Far Left*[3] is a much better book. As a journalist on the Tory *Daily Telegraph* he feels no call to maintain an artificial balance between what is to be perceived as Left and Right extremism; furthermore, what he does cover he covers more fully and thoroughly. Yet he too fails to be clear about moderation and extremism or to distinguish different dimensions of disagreement along which Left-versus-Right distinctions may be made. Nor does he examine the rise of the Labour Left except in so far as this has been achieved by the Trotskyist Militant Tendency.

Baker is, however, master (as Tomlinson is not) of that old favourite Marxist distinction between subjective and objective support. This mastery leads him to include a chapter on "The Anti-Nuclear Movement", ending with the observation: "There can be little doubt that, probably unwittingly, it actively serves the political, strategic and military aims of the Soviet Union . . ." (p. 158).

The Guardian on cue called out an old Left-Wing warhorse to produce a comfortably discrediting review, "Reds All Round the Bed." Their reviewer, whom I forbear to name, had the effrontery to dismiss that conclusion upon the irrelevant ground that the advancement of Soviet hegemony formed part of neither his own personal intentions nor those of the other original founders of CND.

Baker describes the leading (though not always smoothly cooperative) roles in the recent CND revival of the CPGB, Vanessa Redgrave's Socialist Workers Party, Tariq Ali's International Marxist Group, and other Marxist-Leninist organisations. Whatever may charitably be said about their soft-headed supporters, it is ridiculous to pretend that

[2] Presumably Jo Grimond the former Liberal leader who provides an introduction, was unable to detect these distortions, being still a client of that old Liberal and new Social Democratic practice of claiming to constitute a moderate middle precisely equidistant between the two supposed opposite evils of—now—Thatcherism or Benno-Bolshevism!

[3] *The Far Left*. By BLAKE BAKER. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £6.95, paper £3.95.

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these leaders are not fully cognisant of the consequences of responding to the ever-increasing Soviet military build-up by further unilateral Western disarmament. After all, we can—and they must—reflect that the USSR has always installed and maintained irremovable socialist régimes in every territory falling under the control of its armed forces. Is this the way their revolution is now to come: at the bayonet points of the Red Army?

ONE INDEX OF THE ADVANCE of the Labour Left has been the rise of Michael Foot to the leadership. When Harold Wilson succeeded Hugh Gaitskell, Foot and his like were nowhere: the runner-up was George Brown. But, after Wilson, Foot came a very close second behind James Callaghan. Now he is Leader; though, if he ever ponders Ken Livingstone's left-wing coup on the Greater London Council, he must wonder how long he would himself survive a General Election returning a Labour majority (constituted as the party will then be constituted). Anyone thinking to get some idea of what to expect in Britain under Foot is likely to be disappointed by *Michael Foot: A Portrait*.[4] For this the journalist authors, Simon Hoggart and David Leigh, are scarcely to blame. Foot himself seems never to consider or discuss how his policies will affect life outside the House of Commons and Whitehall. Sufficient for him, apparently, that they be "left-wing" and "socialist."

For instance: although it was he who, at the dictation of the trade-union barons, pushed through the enabling legislation, there is no reason to credit him with any anxiety about the implications—for both individual liberty and public debate—of extending throughout the media the Closed Shop power of politically partisan unions. Also, his public campaigning for unilateral disarmament has never embraced any speculation about the triumphant response of the USSR to Britain and Western Europe thus removing obstacles to their expansion. His biographers are not to be faulted for failing to record the thoughts which their subject does not express or, perhaps, does not have.

The most remarkable of the apparent gaps in Foot's thinking is the absence of any treatment of the practicalities of socialism. Remember that he played a major part at the 1959 Party Conference in defeating the Gaitskellite attempt to remove "Clause IV" from the Party constitution. That clause, it should be said, calls for the public ownership of "all the means of production, distribution, and exchange"—in a word, total socialism. It has been since its adoption in 1918, and in a slightly amended form still is, printed on every Labour Party card. Similar clauses are included in the constitutions of most of those major trade unions which created, financed, and through their block votes (one trade union boss, one million votes) control that party. It was Foot who at that 1959 Conference, "his voice pitched high, his arms flailing", denounced any private and pluralist alternative to such total socialism as "the evil, the rotten, the disgraceful society. . . ."

YET NEITHER THEN NOR SINCE has Foot paid attention to questions of how State-Monopolistic producers of goods and services are to be made efficient wealth-creators, responsive to the general public rather than to particular factions among their own employees. More to the present point, he seems never to have asked how, if at all, the British Labour Party is to achieve the internationally unprecedented feat of combining our traditional civil liberties and pluralist politics with a totally socialist economy. He has, like too many others, managed not to notice either the universal experience of the now numerous fully socialist foreign countries, or the open totalitarian threats made here at home by the less discreet of the Benno-Bolsheviks. The miners' leader, Arthur Scargill, for instance, told TV viewers (in May 1980, on BBC's *Platform One*) that there was "little danger" that the next Labour administration would ever be ousted. "The most important element", he was happy to say (though he passed over the others), "would be the nationalisation of the media."

THE FUNDAMENTAL, yet constantly overlooked reason why the resistance of the "moderates" and the "centre-right" has been and remains so half-hearted and so feeble is that they all are (or at least have to pretend to be) fellow-socialists, albeit more or less moderate rather than extreme. Party members who say or imply that they are not, face an unanswerable challenge: "If you are not a socialist at all, then what business have you in our Party? Why do you not join the Liberals?" I well remember putting such challenges when—in good Clem Attlee's golden days—I was myself a socialist, and therefore in the Labour Party. The transformation effected in recent years has, I am afraid, not been of a non-socialist into a socialist party; when Mr Tony Benn appeals to the forthright socialist professions of an Attlee or a Bevin he is not misquoting.

The great changes which have indeed occurred are different. *First*, a party which had been content to move not very fast—becoming exasperated by discovering that such short steps have not brought

[4] *Michael Foot: A Portrait*. By SIMON HOGGART and DAVID LEIGH. Hodder & Stoughton, £8.95, paper £5.95.

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the New Jerusalem appreciately nearer—is now eager to impose, with all possible haste, total and (the sinister word recurs in recent manifestos) "irreversible" socialism.

Second, whereas for many years after World War II both the Labour Party and the TUC were overwhelmingly committed to genuine liberal democracy (as opposed to all "socialist" or "People's" substitutes), this is no longer anything like so clearly true. For the Labour Party now regularly exchanges annual conference and other delegations with ruling monopoly Communist Parties, issuing shameless and shameful statements about their "common dedication to peace, democracy, and socialism." The TUC, too, normally now sides with the Socialist Bloc in the East and its institutions. In 1981 only a timely cancellation by the Polish Government saved David Basnett and other trade unionists the embarrassment of visiting *not* Solidarity but its bogus official state-controlled rival. In 1976, a year in which in America the AFL-CIO honoured Alexander Solzhenitsyn, our TUC entertained the state-appointed boss of the Soviet *Arbeitsfront*—Alexander Shelepin, sometime Director of the Gulag Archipelago (and hence Solzenitsyn's gaoler).

RESISTANCE to both of these radical transformations has been inhibited by the general socialist commitment. If you have for years been, and propose to continue, working for socialism alongside people who are themselves objectively, if not subjectively, opposed to liberal democracy; then you have shown, and are continuing to show, that for you that difference is less important than what you have in common. You are, therefore, reduced to arguing that to try to go so much faster—or to reveal such very close affinities with the Socialist Bloc and its institutions—would prevent the party ever winning a parliamentary majority. But this, given both the blind strength of traditional Labour Party loyalties and the spectacularly misrepresentative vagaries of an abominable electoral system, is highly implausible. Nor has it in fact proved generally persuasive.

The potentially disastrous significance of that electoral system can be elegantly underlined with a quotation from the General Secretary of the Labour Party, going on the stump to oppose any reform making the distribution of seats within Parliament correspond more faithfully to that of the votes cast.[5] *The Times* (12 December 1977) reported his warning:

> "Proportional representation means coalition governments at Westminster on the lines of our European partners, and it would be goodbye then to any dreams or aspirations for a democratic socialist Britain."

[5] The fact that most Conservative spokespersons are equally strongly opposed to such a reform is the best reason for reviving an exasperated description first applied by John Stuart Mill: he spoke of "the stupid party."

A Barbarous Eloquence

Recent Poetry—By ALAN JENKINS

WHEN D. H. LAWRENCE'S upper-class friends told him he had genius it was, he would point out to others, as if they thought this would make up for his having lacked their own inestimable advantages. The bearers of praise would probably have put this ungraciousness down to bad manners or a chip on the shoulder, but in so doing they would have missed the point. For Lawrence was not just being shrewd, he was being cannily self-protective; he may or may not have envied the well-born their money or privilege, but what is certain is that there was a particular kind of praise he wasn't interested in and didn't want.

The patronage of the wealthy was one thing; their patronising was another. And when Tony Harrison in "On Not Being Milton" presents himself not as a lord but a Luddite of language, and imagines "Each swung cast-iron Enoch of Leeds stress / [Clanging] a forged music on the frames of Art, / the looms of owned language smashed apart!", he throws a challenge to his readers, defying them not to be jolted by his aggressing of the pentameter line; at the same time the drift and tone of his words are clear enough to pre-empt the kind of praise that smacks of appropriation—the kind that would note the neatness of the historical metaphor, the pun on "forged", and so on. The School of Eloquence, according to the epigraph from E. P. Thompson, was one of the last "covers" for the London Corresponding Society, and Harrison's *Continuous: 50 Sonnets from "The School of Eloquence"*[1] declares its allegiance on the first page to the LCS, to "Tidd the Cato Street

[1] *Continuous*. By TONY HARRISON. Rex Collings, £2.95.

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Conspirator who wrote / *Sir, I Ham a very Bad Hand at Righting*", and to the themes of "class and counter-class."

If this suggests immediately the taking up of ideological positions, the waving of flags and the rhetoric of "struggle", that is simply the effect of wrenching Harrison's words out of their context. For Harrison is no bad hand at writing; and what he is out to attack is the notion that English poets and their audience are not interested in class or politics, that the society of the poem is a classless one, and that there is an unchallengeable consensus as to what the poem—even "the well-made poem"—is and does. Stated baldly like that, it sounds like a caricature (completed by the assumption that religion in poetry is well and truly done for and that the English, being English, have their own special problems with sex). But for Harrison the problem is real enough, is, in fact, the source of much of his fervent anger; yet his sonnets go about their subversive task with such subtlety and intelligence—even, or particularly, when they are purposefully crude, awkward, "inept"—that he leaves us persuaded of profound rightness where we could be left feeling hectored or embarrassed, and convinced of the richness of the enterprise where there might be only a dry "commitment."

Partly this has to do with tone: Harrison's is seldom raucous unless he wants it to be, and then it is so to good effect; partly it is because, while every word in his poems can seem like a weapon taken up in class warfare, those words derive their immediate charge from the personal dilemma out of which Harrison writes, at the prompting of an insistent need—the need to *break silence*. Tidd's declaration is quoted "in the silence round all poetry"; Harrison's "two uncles, Joe and Harry" were respectively tormented by language, and cut off from it—"one was a stammerer, the other dumb"; and his parents, having lived out the quiet lives they were born to, have been lost to the silence of death, unreachable by their son's double-edged "eloquence." When they were alive and aware of their son's gift it was an embarrassment; the scholarship boy reluctantly swotting up his Classics, the travelled poet and translator/playwright who speaks a baker's dozen languages, is an uneasy and "unnatural" presence in the working-class household:

> *The family didn't always feel together.*
> *Those silent teas with all of us apart*
> *when no one spoke except about the weather*
> *and not about his football or my art.*

His achievements brought them, not pride, but a threat to the pride they had: his mother after reading *The Loiners* cries out in shamed anguish, "*You weren't brought up to write such mucky books!*", and his bereaved father lashes out of his grief at Harrison's inability to find the right word for the headstone: "*You're supposed to be the bright boy at description/and you can't tell them what the fuck to put!*"

Harrison has learned that "articulation is the tongue-tied's fighting"; but this is an adult sort of awareness. The experience of wordlessness, the hunger for words, begins much earlier, with nursery-rhymes on his mother's lap, then at school it is immediately twisted out of shape by a literary prejudice that is also a class prejudice. "You barbarian, T.W.! . . . Can't have our glorious heritage done to death!" chides a master as T.W. recites, and mispronounces, Keats; the boy is given the "comic bits", the prose parts, the humble parts to read in Shakespeare. Yet he chews up "Litterer-chewer" and feeds, too, on his family's inarticulacy, until "Theirs are the tongues of fire I'm forced to swallow/then bring back knotted, one continuous string/igniting long-pent silences. . . ."

THE KNOTTED QUALITY of Harrison's lines, the conceits, puns and metrical pyrotechnics, the timing and placing of dialect words and phrases, of fragments of others' speech, the play on images and on pronunciation (or "enunciation"), are part and parcel of his subversion of "tradition" (that poetry is the preserve of a privileged few) by traditional means, his making *all* the verbal resources of poetry, the "owned language", his own. They are part, too, of his recognition that directness, even bluntness of tone, can leave room for indirectness, suggestion, irony and wit. There is so much pathos, in fact, in the poems dealing with the deaths of both parents—in which everything that has been left unspoken between parents and son can be, if not stated, at least brought into the realm of utterance—that they would risk mawkishness without such "poetic" defences. When Harrison evokes the house and neighbourhood of his upbringing, his parents, grandparents and the people "Next Door", the details of life and death in a specific time and place are never pushed into symbol, are never more than themselves, yet are themselves with absolute authority: "Litter and lavender in ransacked drawers"; "Now mi dad's the only one keeps up his front"; "*Ay, t'*Off Licence, *that's gone Paki in t'same way!*"; and

> *He couldn't risk my blight of disbelief*
> *though sure that very soon he'd hear her key*
> *scrape in the rusted lock and end his grief.*
> *He knew she'd just popped out to get the tea.*

It is only by being both "at home" and estranged in this reality that Harrison can write this well, with as much surface simplicity and actual complexity as he does, allowing the telling details to take their place in a pattern of images that seems given rather than made. Yet when the pattern

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draws attention to itself it does so hectically, thrusting on us a sense of strain and awkwardness. Harrison may be a virtuoso in some respects, but he must be seen to be careless of his own virtuosity; his poems must not seem a matter of mere "performance", however dazzling, fulfilling the expectations—in the realms of prosody or linguistic decorum—of his assumed, principally bourgeois, readers. For his "family" poems and the poems to do with social history risk an act of restitution and piety, of redemption, in fact: redemption of a class, of loved figures in his own life, of a language. The poetry can invest them with dignity and poignancy only because it is responding to these qualities as Harrison senses them in his subjects to begin with. When he moves away into other areas of experience and feeling, the awkwardness seems more troubling, the knotted language less effective: "The Malverns darken as the dusk grows in./The rowan berries' dark red glaze grows dull." "An uncharred cherry flaunts a May of flames." Around the poems on the themes of "Art and extinction", which make a plea for the rescuing of endangered species, there hovers an air of confident right-thinking and suavely polished gloom. This is the revenge of total, careless mastery.

PETER REDGROVE'S LANGUAGE is made to behave as if there were no such thing as "class" in Tony Harrison's sense, and as if there had been no poetry before his own: it rushes along on a tide of energy and enthusiasm, exulting in its own unbridled impulses. For once the superlatives of the blurb to *The Apple Broadcast*[2] (though referring to a previous collection) seem appropriate, if repetitive: "original and vigorous"; "vigorous visual imagery and powerful rhythm"; "potent fertility." To have all this, and be a "supremely inventive comedian" as well! It must be hard to contain so much self-generating energy in a single poem of a dozen or so three-line stanzas; and it is certainly hard for a reader to hold on to much meaning for long in the maelstrom of image on image, wave on wave of sense-perceptions and sense-impressions. This is hardly an improper, still less irreverent view; Redgrove himself has said that his poetry is concerned to speak of what he calls "the energies underneath the skin" (of the human body, of the earth, of Creation), and it should be clear enough to anyone by now that his poems are not just a "speaking of", but an *acting out* of those energies, and as such the only adequate response to them. And if our usual discriminations, or those we expect poets to make, between impressions,

[2] *The Apple Broadcast and Other New Poems.* By PETER REDGROVE. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £3.00.

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images, impulses, tones and registers have no part to play in this, so much the worse for them.

The energy, indeed, spills over from line to line, tercet to tercet, and from poem to poem throughout this book. And it is as such that we should read the poems: *as a book*, in the manner prescribed by Donald Davie for Pound's *Cantos*, taking each poem at a run, not worrying unduly about how much we understand of Redgrove's meaning, enjoying the rhythms that run through the whole. This is surely the point of a collection in which the overwhelming majority of the pieces are arranged in three-line stanzas, with metrical and syntactical patterns of great variety running over and through the groupings, but with continuity established only by the shape of the groupings themselves—"rhythm" in Redgrove is itself a kind of rhetoric, as much so as imagery. Even with this way of reading there can and must be, of course, an occasional slowing down to take in details of verbal texture or felicities of local effect—principally visual ("Marmalade like an aquarium of orange eels"; "Such a gondola of yellow rooms/Striped with black rooms", of a wasp; "the magnolia's white bush-fire, like a shower/Of fangs . . .") but often robustly comic ("Grass spreads its tablecloths, and the cattle feast,/Our feast feasts"). This is witty, it has its flash of grimness, but it is also a celebration; such effects, akin to those of black farce, run through many pieces, most notably "Next Door on the Left" and "The Midas Variation."

Redgrove's preoccupations are consistent enough for us to establish at least some hold on his world: alchemy and myth, as filtered through Jung; the mysteries of biochemistry and physics, bodied forth in all natural movement and change, in airwaves (Redgrove is a great amateur of the "wireless" and of television) and electrical impulses of all kinds; and most electrifying of all, the exhilarating throb of a celebratory eroticism. He has called himself a materialist, in love with all matter; but in his exalted vision matter is often transformed into a manifestation of "spirit." As one reviewer of this book has pointed out, assent to the progress of a Redgrove poem is also an ascent; the poems are "spiritual exercises", and Redgrove means them to enlighten us.

THE POEMS contained in George Szirtes's *November and May*[3] are largely concerned with propitiating the grimmer or less manageable gods and with trying to wrest a quirky, by no means comforting morality—in both senses—from the already quirky occurrences of the everyday and the domestic. The epigraph from MacNeice's "Snow" ("There is more than glass between the snow and the huge roses") suggests that Szirtes has sensed the limitations of meticulousness, starkness, cleanliness, a strong visual quality, unblurred impressions, confidence and clarity—the terms in which his previous volume was praised—and begun instead to look out for the "mundane apparition", the unattended moment of mystery or menace; to look out, too, for the words and rhythms that will evoke this malady of the quotidian with oblique forcefulness, deadened, remote decorum of manner:

> *Forms appear suddenly in mirrors and photographs,*
> *We do not think however that they are entirely at home.*
> *At night the doors are locked. We lock them now.*

The rhythms in some poems here may owe something to MacNeice; this numbed serenity of tone while giving utterance to a disturbing and discomfiting vision, and the tendency to turn the arresting perception into a pretext for speculation, are vaguely reminiscent of the Fullers, *père et fils*. But Szirtes's language is neither as fluent nor as subtly resonant as theirs. It is, though, sometimes agreeably odd:

> *Yet someone is standing, waiting quietly*
> *making that darkness luminous. I riffle*
> *through my acquaintance, dead or living.*

Or "Bravely they swoon it until quite pegged out." *Pegged out* is a (deliberate?) lapse of register; and *acquaintance*, though exact and obscurely pleasing, is no less odd for that: no one *speaks* like this. Perhaps the strangeness has something to do with the fact that to Szirtes English was, and perhaps in some residual way remains, a foreign language. It is crucial, anyway, to what his poems convey: bits of a world seen up close, with time infinitely slowed—as in the ambitious sequences "Misericords" and "The Dissecting Table"—shot through with flashes of a cryptic, distinctly foreign wisdom.

For the most part, "The hybrid language serves and makes the point", as in the poem "A Reunion"; occasionally Szirtes's ear fails him, and the cadences refuse to be other than stiffly inert. This surely excessive flatness and clumsiness mars what is otherwise the most memorable piece in the book, "The Birdnesters": "It was a miracle they had not clubbed/Each other into insensibility." Elsewhere in the same poem we have an exceptional delicacy and power, corresponding to a very different order of seeing:

> *Except one bird that seemed perfectly still,*
> *Hovering, glacial, directly above*

[3] *November and May*. By GEORGE SZIRTES. Secker & Warburg, £4.50.

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The blurring figures of Jean and Henri
Like some strange and dangerous benediction.

It is for these strange and dangerous benedictions, and for its subtle paradoxes and contradictions, that Szirtes's poetry should be read.

GAVIN EWART'S POEMS, too, have never been afraid to approach the condition of undistinguished prose—from which they are held back, just, by sheer technical verve, a tightrope-walking act sustained with such metrical panache that one begins to ignore the acrobat's predicament and admire the skill that goes into the performance (and performance, this time, has nothing problematic about it: it proceeds unashamed). Ewart is so good at flirting with the dangers of triviality or bathos as he goes through his turn that we cease to notice whether he actually manages to pull back in time; instead we watch, delighted and amazed, as his gestures grow more daring. It would be easy, for example, to acknowledge how—with only a slight diminution of his powers, only the merest slackening of tension or relinquishing of poise—all the truisms turn out to be true, how effortlessly *The New Ewart: Poems 1980–1982*[4] lives up to the encomiums heaped on *The Collected Ewart:* well-shaped . . . imagination hand in hand with virtuosity . . . compulsively readable, devastatingly funny . . . cleverer and funnier as the years go by . . . heroically unpretentious . . . unflaggingly entertaining . . . weighty. . . . It would be easy, too, not to see how mordant and touching and determinedly *un*funny many of these recent poems are. For example, from "The Semi-Sapphics":

Looking at mirrors never makes them feel much better.
The best you can wish them is someone to like them,
the frank confidence, the reciprocated cuddle.
That might improve them.

There are plenty of dead or dying animals here, also "The Animals at the Adelaide Zoo" (which Ewart described at a recent reading as a poem about the comfortably-off Western democracies and the Third World: well, maybe . . .). Many more poems are about ageing and approaching death, illness, receding hair and sexual opportunity, and about how terrible it is that "As you settle into peace, or dourness,/That bitter-sweet, that sweet-and-sourness,/is a vanished taste"; a few look back to the War, including the incomparable "Gritty", and this, from "Pian dei Giullari", as the poet revisits the scene of a Wartime love

[4] *The New Ewart: Poems 1980–1982.* By GAVIN EWART. Hutchinson, £4.95.

'funny, tender and highly readable' *Daily Telegraph*
'fascinating' *Sunday Times*
'a born writer' *Observer*
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affair ("Never go back, they say. Never go back./I went back":

The landscape that we saw from our windows
in a time of cicadas and nightingales
stood there unaltered.
I looked at it and felt the warm lightness
of khaki drill on my shoulders.

The poem, ceasing to be plangent, becomes piercing.

To offset all this, of course, there is the metrical variety and virtuosity in abundance; there are the glorious rhymes ("testiculate or clitorate/literate"); the parodies and pastiches (Joyce, Emily Dickinson, Smart, Longfellow, an utterly surreal J. C. Powys, and every imaginable register of fatuity, every vintage of English "Veuve Cliché"). There is a rough-and-ready, no-nonsense, knock-down-and-drag-out philosophy behind much of it ("It's so true we all want something—and that something might be someone—/that the only problem left is: do we do it sad, or gaily?") and a moralist's distrust of the "Puritans", the enemy, against whom Ewart's poems wage all-out war.

Do Ewart's poems have to be called "serious" or "light"? He can sound like Larkin ("It's when the slow darknesses loom") or like Ogden Nash, he is happiest to be compared to Burns; yet his true master is Auden. Particularly, perhaps, the late Auden, who out of the accents of High Table and studied conversation among old friends brewed his own "social" manner, whereas Ewart, while recognising the value of the relaxed, intimate tone—at its worst, merely chatty—lets his infatuation with doggerel and the demotic carry him naturally towards the idiom of popular song, the overtones of Noel Coward ("Strange how potent cheap music is!"). Perhaps he is simply our greatest living lyricist.

THE RISKS OF opting for the resolutely anti-poetic are demonstrated by the few failures in Peter Reading's *Tom o'Bedlam's Beauties*.[5] Reading clearly owes something to Ewart's example; behind him stands Auden again, and behind him one of Auden's masters, Skelton. So Reading can align himself with a strong team of English social commentators and satirists. His subject in this collection is, as its title indicates, the asylum: Bedlam, the loony-bin, the funny-farm and the inhabitants thereof. The first part of the book details the variety of ways in which people end up in a straitjacket or padded cell; the second part, *Some of their Efforts* (the note of condescension is just right), sketches in a few of the human documents—or at least the human voices, the messy reality of pain and breakdown—behind the findings of "Glibber and Crass" on "The therapeutic value of Poetry practised amongst the mentally disturbed." The personae of this tragi-comedy (every snigger becomes a wince as the exactness of the suffering and the pity makes itself felt between the lines of Reading's terse, alliterative utterance) range from the simple-minded, through the victims of "stress", to the suicidally depressed.

The point about all of them is not that they are mad, but that they have such good reason to be so; some, like the splendid Brigadier Peregrine Fash-point-Shellingem or the narrator of "Artemus' Wardrobe" ("A Bedlamite, got luce without is droors!/The most embarrassust I ever been") are simply out of it in the world at large. Some of the same personae crop up in more than one poem; events in one piece will in another be seen from a different point of view. The book's unity derives not just from these linkages and cross-referrings, but also, perhaps most importantly, from the powerful if muted sense of compassion and anger which plays over all the *vignettes*: and this is the ground-note of Reading's laconic, flexible tone. One or two pieces are unsatisfactory because they tend to a clichéd neatness or over-simplification in the delineating of plot or character; for the most part the poems are persuasive and unsettling.

[5] *Tom o'Bedlam's Beauties*. By PETER READING. Secker & Warburg, £4.50.

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A BOOK OF fifty sixteen-line poems is notionally identical to Tony Harrison's; but no two books could be more dissimilar than *Continuous* and John Ashbery's *Shadow Train*.[6] Ashbery gives us quatrains of varying line-lengths, not Meredithian sonnets; and he shares with us not Leeds but the streets and interiors of New York City. In these short pieces he has found a way out of the speculative mazes and the *longueurs* of *Litany*; these beautiful and tantalising addresses to an unspecified *you* are his best poems since *Portrait in a Convex Mirror*. The contrast with Harrison is of course total, and could be elaborated: it has been said of Ashbery that he does not write poems, but has "poetic" thoughts, and there is truth in that view; his world, rather than articulating itself into highly-wrought, densely-packed arrangements of particulars, is constantly on the point of dissolving into uncertainty and nothingness, self-doubt and solipsism; and he has taken over from Wallace Stevens not only as a "philosophical" poet but as *the* quintessential poet of bourgeois comforts and discontents.

All that needs to be said has been said about his debts, to abstract painting, to various French writers, to Whitman, to the circumambient airs and graces of "postmodernism." But has it been remarked how replete his best poems are with *things* (even when he is least sure of them, or of his relation to them), or how engaging his exquisitely urbane, off-hand musings can be when, as here, he allows his true, central voice to dictate their modulations, a voice full of unfeigned bafflement before one of the simplest yearnings of all: that caused by the rift between the child's world of unknowing delight and the adult's burden of sexual knowingness? Ashbery is as knowing and sophisticated as they come, but he wants to recover an innocence that will somehow make everything all right again—all right between himself and the world of objects, or between the " 'I'/in the novel told in the first person that / This breathy waiting is" and the "you" that Ashbery wishes could be one with it.

The book everywhere points to the way this could come about, to the simplicities that can redeem even the most complicated of human dealings: "Now that you've done it, say OK, that's it for a while"; "*There was a boy*"; "Trust me"; "Lost, I found the small stand in the wood./It was funny and quiet there." But something else always intrudes: "The helmeted head is tilted up at you again / Through a question. Booze and pills?" What is left is an attitude, or a series of attitudes:

And if you have curled and dandled
Your innocence once too often, what attitude
isn't then really yours?

[6] *Shadow Train*. By JOHN ASHBERY. Carcanet, £3.25.

Remains

Though thousands traipse round Wordsworth's Lakeland shrine
imbibing bardic background, they don't see
nailed behind a shutter one lost line
with intimations of mortality
and immortality, but so discrete
it's never trespassed on "the poet's" aura,
nor been scanned, as it is, five strong verse feet.

W. Martin's work needs its restorer,
and so from 1891 I use
the paperhanger's one known extant line
as the culture that I need to start off mine
and honour his one visit by the Muse,
then hide our combined labours underground
so once again it might be truly said
in words from Grasmere written by the dead:

our heads will be happen cold when this is found.

W. Martin
paperhanger
4 July 1891

Tony Harrison

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AUTHORS & CRITICS

The Controversy over Bombers & Bombing

By Max Hastings

I COME FROM the generation reared on *Cockleshell Heroes* and *The Wooden Horse*, Desmond Young's *Rommel* and Montgomery's memoirs, *Odette* and *The Cruel Sea*. Schoolboys in the 1950s, we grew up with father's old revolver in the spare-room cupboard, battledress jackets still worn for gardening, bomb sites in Kensington as familiar landmarks on the way to the park.

I learnt a story of the Second World War dominated by the campaign in the West. The Russian front was a shadowy sideshow of which I was aware only because of *P.Q.17*. Our school history-notes cited Alamein as the turning point. A model of Monty was among Britain's best-selling toy soldiers: he loomed large in my mind because with his neatly-painted twin cap-badges he always commanded one of the nursery armies.

By the time that I was ten, I think I could have flown a Lancaster bomber if I had been lifted into the cockpit. The air offensive against Hitler's Germany produced three books that had a powerful romantic impact on 'Fifties schoolboys: *The Dambusters*, Guy Gibson's *Enemy Coast Ahead*, and Leonard Cheshire's *Bomber Pilot*. They were all written by or about brave men to whom, as Cheshire wrote, "war came easily": an heroic romp or a succession of fascinating professional challenges. Of fear, cowardice and failure we understood nothing.

Though our knowledge of the air war was so obsessive, in a curious way, at some point a few feet above the soil of the Reich, it stopped. We were always, vicariously, in the cockpit gazing down through the perspex into darkness. Of what had taken place in Germany, of what the bomber offensive had achieved or cost, why it was undertaken and to what ends it was pursued, we were quite ignorant. We knew the Möhne, the Eder and the Sorpe; but we had never heard of Dresden. We knew that many men had died in the air, but it would have been an intolerable shock to us to discover that only a tiny fraction of all those who began a tour of bomber operations ever finished it; that incomparably more German women and children died than adult men; that when those eager, moustachioed, beer-drinking young warriors from Canada and Australia and the Operational Training Units arrived at last at their stations (in our minds to the tune of *The Dambusters'* March), most of them were statistically doomed men.

I am trying to explain a little of the road by which I reached the writing of my book *Bomber Command*, because when the deluge of criticism from the air marshals fell upon me in September 1979, I was naively astonished to read of my "prejudice against the Royal Air Force and all that it stands for"; to discover that I was typical of a younger generation that understands nothing of the brutal demands of war; to be asked by an interviewer on BBC TV's *Pebble Mill At One* if I was a pacifist. None of this demands sympathy—I regret nothing of what I wrote, and I am astonished and delighted by the sales figures. But the controversy surrounding the book since that September has taught me a little more about war and about senior professional service officers than I knew when it was published.

I BEGAN my serious military education as a reporter in Biafra and Ulster in the late 1960s, added something in Indo-China and the Middle East, and much more from reading the new generation of military historians who began to reconsider the Second World War in the '60s. Then I learnt a little from an unhappy experience four years ago, when I was asked to write a book with official Israeli cooperation about a young colonel who led some of their most dashing commando raids, and was killed outside the Old Terminal at Entebbe.

Having begun with a conventional picture of a happy warrior, as I talked and read about the man in Israel and America, I became more and more depressed by a quite different image that emerged: of a troubled, confused, melancholic young man who had become weary of killing people, but could see no escape from doing so. The sadness and essential wretchedness of his life did not fit the vision sought by any of the interested parties to the book, and much had changed in the published version, not much to my credit.

When my American publisher suggested that no one had yet told the real story of Bomber Command, I started two years of research, determined that this time I would not make quite the same mistakes. First, I would try to tear up my childhood memories, and go out to talk to old aircrew

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as if I had never heard of Gibson or Cheshire, as if I did not know a Lancaster from a Wellington. I would show the completed manuscript to no one except the publisher. I would start from scratch to tell the story, as if no one had ever told it before.

When I had finished the book, I was almost as saddened as when I finished the draft about the young Israeli. For all the huge effort, the great courage and skill and perseverance that had been poured into the Allied bomber offensive, the last paragraph of my book read thus:

> "The bomber offensive partly fulfilled useful purposes for the Allied war effort. Bomber Command entirely satisfied Churchill's hopes as I have interpreted them at the beginning of 1942, by fighting a long holding action to buy time to launch *Overlord* on overwhelmingly favourable terms. If the airmen had pitched their demands for resources, their own hopes and their subsequent claims more modestly, history might have judged them more kindly. As it was, their ambitions overwhelmed their abilities. The cost of the bomber offensive in life, treasure and moral superiority over the enemy tragically outstripped the results that it achieved."

I argued that Lord Portal, as Chief of Air Staff, had retained one of the most overblown reputations of the War, and that he bore much more responsibility for pursuing area bombing *à outrance* than Sir Arthur "Bomber" Harris, his subordinate. I suggested that the RAF's determination to justify its existence as an independent service persuaded some senior airmen to pursue strategic bombing obsessively, even in the face of evidence of its ineffectiveness.

BUT I ALSO WROTE at length about the extraordinary courage and endurance of the aircrew, and their achievements in the face of impossible difficulties. I accepted that tactical air power and maritime air support had been decisive in almost every campaign of the War. In 1940 and 1941, it was entirely understandable that Churchill backed the bomber offensive to the limit, because Britain possessed no other means of carrying the war to the enemy. It was only in 1942–43 and afterwards that the great juggernaut of Bomber Command seemed to gain irresistible force while lacking rational objectives. As evidence mounted of the failure of bombing to break German morale, ever greater bomber production programmes were mounted and ever more staggering predictions were made by the airmen. It was Harris, in December 1943, who promised that he would bring Nazi Germany to surrender by April 1st 1944 if he could have another 15,000 Lancaster sorties in the Battle of Berlin. He got them. In 1940, one division of the RAF had proved that bomber attacks could be broken, while the British people showed that their morale could not. Yet from 1940 onwards, even when the whole strategic picture of the War had changed, the other division of the RAF devoted enormous effort and 56,000 aircrew lives to proving that it could do to the Germans what the Germans had so signally failed to do to us.

TWO FORMER SENIOR AIRMEN opened the assault on the book. Air Commodore G. S. Cooper, the *Daily Telegraph*'s Air Correspondent, was perhaps the source of a ranging shot in the paper's "Peterborough" column two days after publication, noting that the former Eighth Air Force commander General Ira Eaker had arrived in London denouncing the book. Peterborough's story ended with the laconic comment: "Max Hastings is 33."

Next day, on the book pages, Air Commodore Cooper launched his bombardment in earnest. The book vividly described the courage and determination of the aircrew, he said:

> "They knew fear, but still pressed on. Could this determination have been based on courage alone, or was it also fired by an intelligent belief in the value of the offensive?"

Of the book as a whole the Air Commodore said that "as a contribution to our understanding of both the development of air power and the leaders responsible for directing its course, it lacks depth and credibility. . . ." Like many other modern writers, he wrote, I seemed

> "not to understand that if Hitler had been allowed an opportunity to develop a comparable striking force, he would have had no compunction about using it. . . . Mr Hastings's most persistent criticism is directed at the air force's belief in the importance of concentration of air power, and its ambition to deal a decisive blow at Germany. Stressing that the blow did not turn out to be decisive on its own, the author seems bent on persuading his readers that the joint efforts of the British and American bomber offensives should therefore be judged a failure. . . ."

I wrote a letter for publication in the *Telegraph*, in the hope of correcting some of the Air Commodore's grosser misrepresentations of my argument. The Editor deleted my opening paragraph, in which I suggested that to ask a retired senior air force officer to review a book critical of the Wartime direction of the RAF was not unlike asking a fox to review a book on hunting. He did, however, print some later passages in which I pointed out that the whole thrust of the argument from those who opposed area bombing in Britain at the

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time was that by behaving as the Nazis had done, we threatened the very moral foundation on which our War effort was based.

I suggested in the book that much of the tragedy and confusion of the bomber offensive arose from the airmen's failure to agree precisely what results they expected from it, beyond some sort of moral breakdown in Germany, eventually leading to surrender. If no criterion of progress was agreed, nor was one of failure. At the end of the War, the airmen professed themselves satisfied with the catastrophic damage that they had done to Germany. They never appeared willing even to consider the balance between the huge effort poured into the bomber offensive and the real damage done to Hitler's ability to make war. They rejected the US Strategic Bombing Survey—which made little of area bombing—on the grounds that it was a chauvinistic American attempt to prove the case for precision bombing. When Professor Solly Zuckerman's more limited British Bombing Survey also concluded that area bombing had been less than a decisive success, the post-War Air Staff simply suppressed it.

Marshal of the RAF Sir Dermot Boyle followed up Air Commodore Cooper's review with a letter to the *Telegraph*'s correspondence column: "I have not read the book, and in view of the quotation from it, I shall derive neither pleasure nor accurate information from doing so." It was my criticism of Portal that had most severely distressed Sir Dermot—

> "... Those who know realise that Portal was our greatest airman since Trenchard. Why do those who do not know make a point of denigrating the great?"

I could make no useful answer to this, since the book contends that whatever Trenchard's contribution to keeping the RAF in being, all his theories of air warfare proved baseless. Above all, Trenchard had argued that there could be no effective defence against the bomber, and that it was therefore a waste of resources to build fighters. Sir Thomas Inskip, Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence, aroused the Air Staff's furious hostility when he insisted on increasing the proportion of fighters to bombers in the last rearmament plans before the outbreak of War. Trenchard was still denouncing the public's ignorant clamouring for air defence in the spring of 1940. It is ironic that if the air marshals' strategic priorities had been allowed to prevail in the aircraft factories, Fighter Command would have been denied the narrow margin to achieve the RAF's most cherished victory—the Battle of Britain.

THE BOOK APPEARED in the absence of the *Sunday Times*, and to my disappointment *The Observer* did not notice it. I had been hoping that A. J. P. Taylor, an avowed critic of strategic bombing, would write something. He may have felt that he had argued the bomber issue to death, not least in a private correspondence with Sir Arthur Harris, in which the airman felt that he had had the best of it. Harris showed me an apologetic letter from Taylor with the utmost relish one day when I was interviewing him in the course of writing the book.

Oddly enough, the other two principal left-wing organs, *The Guardian* and the *New Statesman*, also ignored the book. Whatever its merits or lack of them, I had expected that they would seize the opportunity for a sermon or two on the crimes of war. Instead, the most formidable torrent of indignation about the morality of bombing came from Geoffrey Wheatcroft in *The Spectator*, which devoted a staggering four pages to the subject. I was deeply grateful to the reviewer for the publicity—a bitter controversy raged in the correspondence column for weeks—but a little dismayed by its nature. Mr Wheatcroft's article was a powerful personal essay on area bombing, making only passing (albeit generous) mention of the book. I am strongly opposed to the view that war can be seen in terms of moral absolutes, and I had been at pains to avoid such loaded words and phrases as "atrocity" and "war crime" in the context of bombing. *The Spectator* fired them like cannonballs.

The Economist, the *Sunday Telegraph*, *The Scotsman*, C. P. Snow in the *Financial Times* and Ronald Lewin in *The Listener* all wrote very generously about the book, chiefly because they concurred with its argument. I was particularly delighted by a late review from Colonel C. M. Woodhouse in the resurrected *Times Literary Supplement*, in which he said that the book contained "probably the most brilliant use of anecdotal material that has so far come out of the Second World War." That is the kind of remark that sends authors happy to bed whoever the reviewer, but from Colonel Woodhouse it meant a great deal, because his wartime SOE adventures in Greece have made him one of those boyhood heroes in no way diminished by time. He knows more than most about the reality of war.

Having quoted his compliments, however, in honesty I should add that he was less certain about my strategic conclusions, and irritated by the book's inadequate notes and references. He exposed me at a very weak point. In the last stages of writing the book, I lost the file containing all my reference numbers from the Public Record Office, and was driven to state weakly in my Acknowledgements that all documents quoted were "from the AIR files in the PRO unless otherwise stated...." I blushed to have been caught out by the *TLS*.

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IN GENERAL, provincial papers were far more critical of my book than the national ones. Several scented a youthful iconoclast at work: "Post-mortems on the 1939–45 war are all too numerous", wrote an anonymous reviewer in the *Derby Evening Telegraph*. He went on to say some kind things before ending: "If this latest contribution on how Britain should have won the war lacks a certain credibility, it is nevertheless an absorbing book."

"A new book published this week tries to resolve the strategic and moral debate [about area bombing]", wrote Geoffrey Booth in the *Bolton Evening News*. "I feel it falls short of doing either." But his review was headlined "IT'S HIGH TIME WE HONOURED THESE MEN", which echoed my own view that the survivors of Bomber Command were shabbily treated at the end of the War, being denied their own campaign medal just as Harris was denied his peerage, by politicians and senior service officers who realised belatedly, after Dresden, that area bombing had become a matter of political controversy, if not moral embarrassment.

The *Bedford Evening Echo* quoted the book's final comment on the failure of strategic bombing, and said: "That conclusion is a complex and controversial one, and many will disagree with it."

Back to the airmen and air enthusiasts: a specialist magazine named *Air Clues* wrote:

> "As a skilful prosecutor, Mr Hastings has two objectives: the RAF itself, whose formation and preoccupation with bombing he bitterly criticises; and Sir Arthur Harris as AOC-in-C Bomber Command.... In presenting his case, Mr Hastings selects his evidence adroitly to prove Churchill, Portal and Harris villains, and rejects anything contrary to his thesis... nor does Mr Hastings take account of feelings at the time: the fact that the air was an accepted dimension of war, and that 1939–45 warfare was total, against the most ruthless and best-armed nation the world had ever seen."

I was dismayed by that one, and others in similar vein, because I would never use the word villain to describe any of the Allied directors of the War. Portal and Harris were perfectly sincere, whatever their misjudgment. I pay repeated tribute in the book to Churchill's genius as a War leader, not the least part of which was his ability to brush aside the preposterous special pleadings of his service chiefs. His memoranda explaining the realities of war to Portal, after the Chief of Air Staff had written repeatedly and at length late in 1941 to urge that all effort be concentrated to win the War by bombing alone, are masterpieces of common sense. For all his ruthlessness and occasional errors of judgment, I believe that Churchill's strategic judgment and sense of the possible were far superior to those of his service chiefs, Brooke alone excepted.

THROUGHOUT THE CONTROVERSY about the book, like many authors before me, I was exasperated by critics seeing on the pages what they wished to see, sometimes apparently from a book quite other than the one I had written. Both advocates and opponents of bombing wished to reduce the arguments to the bleakest shades of black and white: to suggest either that the Germans, having started it, deserved everything they got; or (as a ferocious young left-wing local-radio interviewer put it to me) that the book showed that Churchill was no better than Hitler, that guilt in war is absolute.

I was pleasantly surprised to find that *Royal Air Force News* reviewed the book generously, chiefly because their critic found the description of bomber operations sympathetic. Was the air lobby relaxing its grip on my throat? I had begun to think so, until I opened the spring issue of the *Royal United Services Institute Journal*, to find a review signed simply, disingenuously, C. N. Foxley-Norris. This was Air Chief Marshal Sir Christopher Foxley-Norris, who began:

> "*Bomber Command* is a disappointing book rather than a bad one. A bad historical book usually comes from an author who lacks talent either as a writer or as an historian. When an author enjoys genuine and enviable gifts in both capacities, but allows his prejudices to obscure and diminish them, then his book is in the true sense disappointing. Among others, those prejudices are soon seen to include hostility to what the author sees as 'the officer class' and to the Establishment in general.... His attacks on political and military leaders are ever less persuasive as they become more sweeping.... The treatment of high command and those who wielded it can most charitably be described as understandable in a 33-year-old without experience of such responsibilities. There is a great and important book to be written about Bomber Command in World War II.... Such a book could be unforgettable; because of its inability to give an impartial account of these matters, *Bomber Command* cannot be so regarded."

Sir Christopher's remarks about my alleged hostility to the officer class were inspired partly by what I had written about the social inferiority complex of some RAF officers to their counterparts in the other two services, which I believe explains some of their more obdurate moments in inter-service argument; partly also by the ungenerous treatment accorded to NCO aircrew, especially before the War and in its early stages. The review diminished its own argument on the strategic issues by quoting some passages of mine wholly out of context.

But the assertion that rankled most with me (and say what you will, most reviewers' criticisms

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rankle pretty much with most authors) was that I had been afflicted by prejudice in my judgment on strategic bombing. I thought back to all that childhood hero-worship, to involuntary tears watching *The Dambusters*, to the thrill that still touches me when I see one of the last surviving Lancasters, to all the emotion for Gibson, Cheshire and the rest. What manner of prejudice? I wrote an intemperate letter for the RUSI *Journal*'s next issue, arguing that it is Sir Christopher's generation of airmen who have spent their lifetimes so obsessed with Strategic Bombing that even now, forty years on, they are incapable of taking part in open debate about it.

PERHAPS THE MOST STRIKING characteristic of all the reviews, favourable and hostile, was that they made me glumly conscious that I had failed to alter the preconceptions of any of those who wrote them. Those who liked the book did so chiefly because they agreed that bombing had not justified its human, material, and moral cost. Some of them said so in terms much more strident than I would have used myself. Those who disliked the book did so because they thought that it had served the Germans right to be bombed, or because they place little value on *post facto* criticism of strategy. Not a single review discussed the detailed evidence that I had presented about the economic achievements and failings of bombing.

GRATEFUL though I was for all the column inches, the published reviews moved me much less than the many letters I received in the months following publication, from former Bomber Command aircrew. Almost all, I was touched to find, were pleased by what I had written about the nature of their terrible war, what it had been like to do it all. Some were critical of my strategic conclusions, others were obviously quite uninterested in strategy anyway. Some wrote very fiercely indeed: "Dear Max Hastings", said a former Squadron-Leader in the Scottish Highlands, "quite simply THANK YOU for writing your book.... I did 35 ops.... Because our New Zealand Wing-Commander wanted to bomb at 3,000 feet we lost 2 crews in one night.... My word, I was so glad you heaped scorn on Butcher Harris and his AWFUL cronies.... THANK YOU. I LOATHE BOMBER COMMAND AND EVERYTHING ABOUT IT!"

"I have read it and will enjoy reading it again. [wrote an almost illegible hand from Poole]. You may have heard from some ex-aircrew blokes who may criticise your book. I thought your comments were basically fair. Perhaps at times I may have been depressed by the thought that we may have been wasting our time. It is a long time ago now, and I was just a very young 19-year-old air gunner with 106 squadron. At that time I felt very proud to get on an operational squadron. I still feel proud as I think you will find most members of Bomber Command do, in spite of anything which may have transpired or anything which may have been said since. We were brave fellers while the war was on, but with the cessation of hostilities 'bombing' became a very dirty word."

The widow of a senior Bomber Command staff officer wrote to tell me how much her husband had adored his C-in-C: "It is a pity that those who were most close to Sir Arthur Harris were not alive to speak to you before you wrote your book.... Harris was not in the least as you portray him. He was a brilliant raconteur, and above all, an extraordinarily kind person.... He had an enormous and spell-binding belief in what he did, and the will to do it...."

In one passage of the book, I mentioned a mid-air collision between two aircraft in which all the crews were killed except a wireless operator who miraculously survived. A letter came from Cumbria: "If you would like any further information on what that wireless operator did and thought in the twenty seconds it took between impact at 7,000 feet and reaching the ground, please let me know...."

A former Observer said: "I am glad that someone has at last written a true account of our story. Also I have found the historical background of great interest because it is true that aircrew at the time had very little idea of how their efforts slotted into the general war effort." A Wellington pilot wrote from Oxfordshire: "When I started to read *Bomber Command* I was prepared, or perhaps I should say predisposed, to be annoyed, following some of the correspondence from senior officers in the press. Instead, I found that you have brought back many proud memories of friends, acquaintances and legendary characters, and captured very accurately the change in atmosphere and character of squadron aircrew at the various stages of the war...."

In the Foreword of my book, I quoted a cynically perceptive remark of Professor D. C. Watt in his essay "The RAF View of History":

> "We do not think less of Leonidas's three hundred Spartans at Thermopylae because, reviewed objectively, their deaths had little effect one way or another on the Persian-invasion of Greece."

If I have to choose between throwing away one *Bomber Command* file or another, I shall forget the reviews, and cherish the letters of the men who survived it all.

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Terrorism & the Media

Myths, Illusions, Abstractions—By HERB GREER

"They say in Harlan County
there are no neutrals there. . . .
Whose side are you on?
Whose side are you on?"

American Folk Song

SO MUCH of the talk about the "Media" reminds one of the late James Thurber's little memoir about his teacher Miss Groby. This good lady was obsessed with figures of speech, and in particular with the type of metonymy called "The Container for the Thing Contained." Thurber tells how he raised a laugh in class with the example of an outraged husband who shouts to his wife, "I'll hit you with the milk!"

An outsized number of those who attract public notice react with outrage, and complain of being hit (or mistreated) by "the Media." This is an even more interesting type of metonymy which I might call "The Container for the Thing Inside the Thing Contained": that is to say the grumblers do not like what goes on inside the heads of those who work in the media. The Left of the British Labour Party and the trade unions whine more shrilly about this than anyone else; but even the moderate centre of public opinion has more than once been disgusted by complaisant media-handling of terrorists, anti-police campaigners, racist blacks, and certain dramatists and documentarists with very rusty axes to grind.[1]

Richard Clutterbuck's *The Media and Political Violence*[2] is on the face of it an attempt to investigate some of the more common complaints from Left and Centre, and to show how the media can be exploited by Extremists and Terrorists. His essay is a "nice taut guide" to the interaction of the media and political spoilers, especially those who make use of violence. In fact this short treatment (191 pages including notes, bibliography and index) of a very long subject has less the flavour of a technical discourse than a polemic against political extremism in Britain. While refuting allegations of deliberate bias in media reportage,[3] the author is willing to forgive some rather mortal sins as long as they are not committed in the cause of extremist politics (or not *deliberately* committed in that cause).

He shows how easily a reporter's or editor's wish to be fair can be subverted when political violence is a part of the events being reported; and he goes a little way (though not far) into the difficulties of communicating through media which are emotional rather than intellectual in their impact. One redeeming aspect is shown in the coverage of industrial disputes. Where the issues are really industrial and the strike generally justified, the presence of cameras discourages the escalation of violence—primarily because union members are usually responsible and do not wish to harm their cause by bad publicity. Where outsiders are involved (as at Grunwick in 1977) and in political demonstrations in which the neo-Fascists of Left and Right provoke violence, the rules of the game alter radically. The Socialist Workers' Party and the National Front aim first of all at grabbing attention, with violence as the infallible bait for reporters and editors to swallow. Wishing to make "news", the political extremists instigate violence, which attracts attention, which in turn excites more violence, which brings in more reporters,

[1] In the first episode of *The Eagle and the Bear* by Jonathan Dimbleby (Yorkshire Television) we were presented with stony-faced Americans riding a tourist bus through Arlington National Cemetery, with a blithe commentary from a smirking guide. Different Americans were then shown snarling hawkishly in front of the White House. Next we had Russians kneeling and weeping copiously as they laid floral tributes on war graves. The same Russians then responded to Dimbleby's prompting questions with demands for peace.

[2] *The Media and Political Violence*. By RICHARD CLUTTERBUCK. Macmillan, £15.00.

[3] See the rather paranoid essays on the media in *Bad News* and *More Bad News* by the Glasgow University Media Group (1976, 1980). These (among other sources) were cited in a tendentious Labour Party Political Broadcast by Anna Coote (16 September 1981), accusing "the Media" of conspiratorial bias.

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which—etc. Dr Clutterbuck shows how the extremists derive a bonus from this vicious circle, using it to lumber the police with a doubly bad image: on the one hand, the forces of law and order are accused of "protecting [right-wing] Fascists", and, on the other, of suppressing the righteous indignation of demonstrators and oppressed minorities. It follows naturally that "law and order" is both authoritarian and racist. The author gives a neat example of such a "media ambush." In 1976 a Trotskyist "Right to Work" march got little coverage until the marchers deliberately attacked their police escort at Hendon. *Socialist Worker* photographers just happened to be present; and in the subsequent riot they managed—somehow—to photograph only the police hitting back at their attackers, not the attack itself. The resulting pictures, carefully selected, were used to support claims that the violence was provoked by a gratuitously brutal police force. As recently as August 1981 a Trotskyist editor of the NUJ's *The Journalist* was still getting mileage out of the photographs and the allegations.

Altogether the policeman's lot in the British media is shown to be a very unhappy one. The book was published too early to deal with the carping and partisan hostility shown to the police after the summer riots of 1981, but Dr Clutterbuck does give an earlier and egregious instance of media unfairness to law-enforcement officers in the minefield of race relations. This was a BBC *Open Door* television slot in which a "Southall Campaign Committee" had free reign for vilification of the police. The BBC disingenuously offered the police a similar slot to "edit their own reply", knowing that they could not legally accept the offer. (The police could not make such a programme on a subject which might result in criminal charges; it might prejudice their testimony in any subsequent trial.)

ONE BAND of interested parties has reason to be pleased with their treatment in the media. These are the terrorists who, more than any other personal objects of reportage, are able to exert some control over what is reported about their activities. The terrorists may time an atrocity to catch newspaper and television headlines.[4] Or they reap benefit from the legal red tape which restrains the official spokesman in order to get their version of events out first—knowing that it will be broadcast or printed without waiting for the "official" version, and almost certainly treated with less scepticism. They can also count on occasional editorial irresponsibility (or perhaps stupidity) to help with their "advertising"—as when the BBC decided to broadcast an interview with a member of the so-called "Irish National Liberation Army" shortly after this cabal had murdered the MP Airey Neave with a bomb on the car park ramp of the Houses of Parliament; or when ITN, covertly defying police instructions, positioned one of their cameras where it might have betrayed SAS preparations to liberate hostages by storming the Iranian Embassy in London.

Dr Clutterbuck records a horrifying anecdote in which a New York radio reporter got himself a "scoop" on a hostage rescue story. All journalists had been cleared from the street where the "action" was taking place, so the reporter telephoned every house in the street until he found someone who was watching the rescue. The following conversation was then broadcast live:

> "You can see the hostage house?"
> "Yes—I'm looking at it right now."
> "OK, brother, you're on the air. Tell listeners what you can see."
> "Well, there's a group of policemen working along the street. They're hiding in a doorway just two doors down. Then there's a couple climbing along the roof. There's a skylight up there. I think it must be in the attic of the hostage house. I think they're making for that. . . ."

Did the kidnappers have a radio? The reporter had not taken the trouble to find out. None of the British examples reaches quite that pitch of criminal stupidity, though British handling of the Schild kidnapping came very close (broadcasting and printing exaggerated and speculative accounts of Schild's wealth which reached the kidnappers very quickly).

Though these last two instances are, strictly speaking, non-political, they highlight a characteristic of the media (especially news media) which plays most readily into the hands of the political criminal. Editors and journalists may indeed wish to "inform" their audience by reporting the news, but they must first of all catch and secure the attention of that audience. Under the conditions of severe competition in which all the media operate today, the quest for attention becomes the *primary* concern of publishers, editors, camera teams, and reporters, whose jobs and income depend on its success. Having seized public attention, journalists must then gauge the attention-span of their audience and tailor their product accordingly.

[4] The Provisional IRA bomb in London on 10 October 1981 was timed to catch weekend television and Sunday newspapers. TV responded with the label of a military "offensive" for this act of criminal butchery which killed one old woman, wounded several civilians including children, and maimed a number of soldiers. (The civilians were not hurt by accident; the terrorists who fired the charge could see them clearly in the street.) *The Sunday Times* also obliged with an editorial—not its first—recommending "withdrawal from Ulster" (i.e. capitulation to the terrorists).

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DR CLUTTERBUCK hovers around this insight, and observes, "The prime motivation of most journalists is to attract attention", but he seems unaware of the implications. He quotes (and apparently accepts) the most appalling excuses for bad journalism. Three of his reporter friends are accused by him of misleading coverage on Viet Nam. They reply: "We report what you want to read. . . . You buy the papers—blame yourself, not us." If the author had grasped this cheap heroin-pusher's logic for what it is, he might have remarked that a journalist—and certainly an editor—has just a little more scope in the shape and content of his material than a pusher, and that a *tu quoque* defence is never used except by those who are guilty as charged.[5] Journalistic gluttony for attention seems actually to *comfort* Dr Clutterbuck, who apparently sees it as evidence of a kind of general political neutrality, and so all right. In fact it gives the Journalist and the Extremist a common interest, making the man with the pen or the camera *more*—not less—vulnerable to the man with the gun. Allowing that journalists are mainly concerned with attracting and keeping an audience, the author believes that "Television reporters report what they see and there is little time or inclination to slant it." I suspect that Dr Clutterbuck has been listening too credulously to journalists and editors, when he should have been looking with a cold critical eye at what they actually sell. Aside from the obvious consideration that "seeing" is a process of selection, he would have found evidence to contradict his view in a great deal of reporting on Southern Africa, nuclear power, and NATO weapons, the Middle East, Central America,[6] El Salvador, the policing of last summer's British riots, and on Northern Ireland (the list is far from exhaustive).

He devotes a good deal of space to Northern Ireland, and to various defences of the way in which the media treat the troubles. Tolerantly Dr Clutterbuck offers this quote from Richard Francis, former head of BBC News:

> "The BBC's credibility depends much more on impartiality than balance and our responsibility lies as much in reflecting the significance of the voices of the people, including subversion, as in sustaining institutions of democracy not wholly accepted."

In so far as that piece of bafflegab means anything, it appears to say (*a*) terrorists are "voices of the people", and (*b*) it is all right to "reflect" their propaganda because they do not "wholly" accept the institutions of democracy. In June 1981, on the BBC-TV programme *The Editors*, Mr Francis (who still defends the decision to broadcast the INLA interview) was more straightforward:

> "I do not believe it is any newsman's job to help anybody. . . . It is not the BBC's job to win the propaganda war for anybody. . . . We know there is a *hypothetical* danger [of being used by terrorists]. . . ." (italics added)

The New York radio reporter could not have put it any better. But even he might have gagged at a BBC *Panorama* broadcast on Northern Ireland which (on 21 September 1981) turned Mr Francis' "hypothetical" danger into hyper-reality. This programme was loaded like a booby-trap with Provisional IRA propaganda, all of it taken at face value (with the British public cast in the role of booby). Among other things the Provos were given the status of an "Army" on the basis of a crudely printed "Training Manual" complete with passages underlined in red by *Panorama* editors to stress that they should be taken very seriously. The terrorists were accepted throughout the programme at their own valuation: as a "freedom fighter" side equivalent in weight and status to the British Government. This quasi-commercial for the Provisional IRA undoubtedly gave these terrorists a massive boost in morale just at the time when their abortive hunger strike was breaking down. Very curious timing indeed.

ADVOCATES OF TV non-responsibility are not the only provenance of strange opinion. Another of Dr Clutterbuck's texts comes from a more august source and carries his express approval. It is a passage from a *Times* leader about "The Press, the Army, and Ulster":

> ". . . The security authorities are engaged in a propaganda war which it is in the national interest that they should win.
>
> The Press, while sharing in the general national interest, have different responsibilities. A newspaper that is realistic will accept that the Army must wage a propaganda war but a newspaper that retains its principles will have no part itself in the conduct of that war. . . .
>
> It would also be a loss if the Press were inhibited in performing that other part of its function: to provide a check against the use of unjustifiable means in a good cause. Every terrorist organisation alleges that its people are tortured. The scrutiny of the Press as well as the options of the authorities have denied the IRA the benefit of that propaganda weapon."

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[5] For a powerful account of just how guilty that can be, see Robert Elegant's "Viet Nam: How to Lose a War" in the August 1981 ENCOUNTER; and the subsequent analysis in "Elegant & Inelegant", *Contentions* (New York, December 1981).

[6] In a 15 March Independent Television News report on the Sandinistas, Jon Snow remarked—inaccurately—that the United States had intervened "directly or indirectly" in Nicaragua no less than 31 times since 1855. His unattributed source for that cagey formulation was the Sandinista Foreign Office.

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This is, first of all, a classic exposition of the idea that the Press (and by implication the rest of the media) occupies a sort of neutral valhalla or no-man's-land in the midst of our society, with "different responsibilities" that somehow supersede those of everybody else. It begs the question of propaganda by an evident assumption that refusal to propagate the views of the security forces (and the society which they defend) leaves the Press somehow quite uninvolved in the "propaganda war." William Rees-Mogg, who was editor of *The Times* when that leader appeared, should know better than anyone how often the Press, television, and radio too have allowed the IRA and their supporters to make the freest use of the "torture" propaganda weapon, sometimes through the publication or broadcast of unsubstantiated and even anonymous allegations. The eager reporting of one such complaint (in the full knowledge that the authorities could not legally reply) probably led to the murder of an Ulster policeman in 1977; the BBC's defence on that occasion was wretched.[7] Perhaps by "scrutiny" *The Times* means a subsequent explanation, or correction, after the fact of a propaganda coup; but this hardly "uninvolves" the media who published the agitprop in the first place. The real message of the *Times* excerpt is itself the purest propaganda, on behalf of the Press as pressure group. It claims a benefit-of-clergy against (or, more charitably, above) the public interest, and does so in confused and self-righteous terms.

THERE IS a classic argument for the freedom of the Press, offered more than a century ago by Alexis de Tocqueville:

> "Nowadays the oppressed citizen has only one means of defence: he can appeal to the nation as a whole, and if it is deaf, to humanity at large. The press provides his only means of doing this."

But the Press is not what it was when Tocqueville was writing (and the electronic media were not even imagined). Victims of oppression and the aggrieved citizen can still appeal in print and over the air for redress, or at least compassion. Even so, the exposure of an appeal depends too often less on the justice of the cause than on the facts of media competition and the fashions which they dictate. Compared to the fulsome coverage given to criminal acts of terrorism or political violence, plus their excuses and rationalisations (habitually disguised as "underlying causes"), the "democratic appeal" part of the media is, with few exceptions nowadays, an uncertain, sometimes *pro forma* affair. At its worst, especially in the treatment of (white) racism, it is an exercise in sanctimony and double standards. "Freedom of the Press" is far too frequently not so much the freedom of good men to speak out, as the freedom to grab attention in whatever way an energetic editor or reporter thinks will out-dazzle his competitors. It does not create an ambiance which is likely to discourage abuses.

No doubt, some of these abuses are dangerous, even lethal, and are clearly inimical to democratic institutions through their effect on public morale. Not least among the dangers is the response of many who wish to "correct" the abuses through some form of centralised censorship. The new Cromwells like Tony Benn and Arthur Scargill want to nationalise the British media and fence them in with their own special strand of political barbed wire. The NUJ (urged on by a loud Trotskyite fringe) wants to nail them down with a closed shop, and total trade union "discipline." In such company one is amazed to find Dr Clutterbuck himself, proposing an "Institute for the Mass Media" to oversee journalism, much as the BMA regulates the medical profession. This scheme includes a register from which erring journalists would be "struck off" and so unable to practise. A roughly similar arrangement already exists in the Soviet Union and its neighbouring states—the result is *samizdat*. Censorship by trade unions, professional associations, or any other pressure group is still something Britain and the rest of the free Western world can do without. Surely the best sanction against abuses which do occur (and are inescapable in a free pluralist society) remains public opinion, capricious as that may be.

We could also do with much less cant about censorship. During the "Colonel B" scandal of 1978—in which the real name of a witness in security matters was published against the instructions of the court—media sanctimony flowed thick and fast over this breach of security. I tried to reply to some of it in a letter to *The Times*:

> "Let's be clear about censorship. The press is censored, in fact, but the men who do the job are not called censors. The title used is 'Editor.' The man with that title decides, by and large . . . what is publishable and what is not—and to a great extent, the form which the published matter takes. This last factor, needless to say, has an enormous effect on its impact and slant.
>
> Now I'd be the last to complain about this situation. On balance it seems better to have a wide selection of censors than to have our information squeezed through a single office in Whitehall. As it is we gain—to a certain extent—in variety and perhaps in quality of information. . . ."

There remains this caveat: without a little more

[7] See my article "The Twopenny Candle" in the June 1978 ENCOUNTER, p. 85.

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careful thought about those mythical "special responsibilities", media hubris may yet provoke public opinion into a demand for, and then an acceptance of, some kind of one-body censorship.[8] If this does happen here, very likely more of the fault will lie with the media than with any would-be dictator.

CONSIDER A REPORT which shows vivid film or photographs of police battering what appear to be helpless demonstrators. With our received ideas about power and its corrupting influence, this adds up to police who are not only powerful and therefore corrupt, but viciously brutal into the bargain. Obviously they need more "democratic accountability", "community control", and so on. To learn two days later from a newsreader's aside that some 112 policemen were hospitalised by those "helpless" victims does little to alter the initial impression. It seems to matter so much more that 14 demonstrators also ended up in hospital.

Another such received idea is the "neutral no-man's land" myth of journalism, and Dr Clutterbuck comes up with yet one more example:

> "The main generators of civil unrest in any country are corruption, abuse of police and other official power, brutality behind the scenes in police and prison cells, and unfair harassment and detention. . . ."

It would be no surprise to find that sentence in a work from the fashionable Left, along with suitable rhetoric about "underlying causes" (why are "overlying causes" never important?). Almost exactly the same catch-words are hawked through the media on behalf of the very extremists the author dislikes so much. He seems unaware of their rhetorical absurdity in a Britain where so much if not most of our contemporary civil strife has been "generated" by economic depression envenomed by extremists, by class prejudice, and by white *and* black racism. Poverty, unemployment, and other ethnic tensions *do* exist in many British communities which did not suffer the violence of Brixton, Toxteth, or Moss Side; and one might remark that there is nothing "underlying" about these "causes." The adjective could be applied with much greater accuracy to the extremist "storm troops" who moved into riotous areas to exacerbate the violence and to coordinate attacks on the police.

ANOTHER SPECIES of *idée reçue* occurs in Paul Wilkinson's introduction to his anthology *British Perspectives on Terrorism*,[9] a set of papers by British "academics and specialists" on various aspects of the subject. Mr Wilkinson avers that Britain has enjoyed "freedom from major internal strife" over the past 150 years. He makes an exception of "John Bull's Other Island" (Ireland was part of the United Kingdom until 1921); and he gives the clear impression that the people across the Irish Sea were in a constant state of bloody anti-colonial uproar from, say, 1798 until 1923.

As it happens, the impression is totally false. Wolfe Tone's famous rebellion had no popular base at all, having been a middle-class and mostly Protestant affair. It lapsed quickly into internecine sectarian slaughter, which petered out after a promised intervention from Jacobin France failed to materialise. Following this chaotic episode, Ireland was annexed to the United Kingdom and (except for the minor, sporadic, and still sectarian skirmishing of agrarian secret societies) remained relatively quiet for the next century. But Mr Wilkinson's "impression" is all-too-familiar. It is a central pillar of Provisional IRA propaganda.

The same myth of unceasing strife can be found in *Contemporary Terror*,[10] edited by David Carlton and Carlo Schaerf. On p.10, in a discussion summary by William Gutteridge, we read that in Ireland "for more than a century-and-a-half there had been continuous risings, bombings, and assassination." At the beginning of the final paper, "Case Study IV: The Irish Republican Army", by J. Bowyer Bell, we are told:

> "Seemingly Ireland has never been at peace or not for long. The struggle for an Irish Ireland, free, Gaelic, united, a nation-once-again, apparently has roots stretching back into the Celtic Twilight."

Mr Bell asserts:

> "By 1971 the Provos were waging a classical armed struggle against the British Army and the RUC. . . ."

Further on, in language more appropriate to a starry-eyed Irish Republican journalist than to a serious academic[11]:

> "[Provo commander] Martin McGuinness at

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[8] Something of the sort exists in British TV advertising now, banning promotion of cigarettes and hard liquor. And by "gentleman's agreement", reporting of anything to do with darker-skinned minorities is treated by the British media with particular "care."

[9] *British Perspectives on Terrorism*. Edited by PAUL WILKINSON. Allen & Unwin, £4.95.

[10] *Contemporary Terror: Studies in Sub-State Violence*. Edited by DAVID CARLTON and CARLO SCHAERF. Macmillan, £20.00.

[11] Dr Bell's favouring of the IRA is more than notional. Testifying in order to help one of their terrorists avoid extradition to Britain in connection with the murder of a policeman, Bell insisted that even the IRA's random bombing, in which no thought is given to political implications, "has a point." This sounds suspiciously like the Jacobin—later Hitlerian—argument that the end justifies the means.

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twenty was tall, slender, with curly red hair and freckles, the Irish lad down the lane. . . ."

Immediately preceding this rubbish the reader will find a paper by Frank Wright: "Case Study III: The Ulster Spectrum." This is an extraordinary piece on the social and historical background and prospects in Northern Ireland. Unlike most contemporary writing about Ulster, it appeals to genuine historical evidence and not to myths and emotions, exposing far better than many longer treatments[12] the desperate complexity of the issues, and showing how the tangled intricacies of social and economic life in Ulster conspire to keep the present conflict alive. It is a rare, sadly atypical exposition of this cruel dilemma, one which should be read and then studied by those—journalists in particular—who wish to gain some insight into the ambiguities and appalling labyrinths of the "Ulster problem."

Contemporary Terror contains a number of other dissertations, ranging from the useful (Yonah Alexander on "The Media and Terrorism")—to the speculative—("Nuclear Violence at the Non-Governmental Level" by Bernard T. Feld)—to the problematic (Bell again): "The wisdom of the specialists is not of great use in looking ahead. . . ."

The Times' radio critic, David Wade, reviewing "a powerful dramatic feature" on terrorism by Ken Gass, a Canadian, was impressed by the following quotation which, together with his own parenthetical addition, he commended to his readers:

> " 'Terrorism is like an adult education course—it makes you think about our institutions' (our values and beliefs as well) 'and whether they are worthwhile. In this way it's too bad that blood is involved, otherwise one might almost say that terrorism is a good thing.' " (22 August 1981).

Wonderful!—adult education, and too bad about the blood! Gulls and simpletons may be "educated" by terrorist violence, but one would surely expect an already educated professional journalist to know that in most people it tends less to provoke careful thought about "values and beliefs" than to incite emotional reaction, and these batten on and confirm rather than criticise received ideas. The terrorist counts, above all, on this Pavlovian response because it gives him a handle to lever himself into political status.

It is this response which gives the emotional edge to an ideological pattern; as in the mythical "age-old struggle of the Irish Nation" against British "colonial domination." This so-called struggle in its present form is less than a hundred years old, and it has been waged not by the Irish people but by a small and generally unpopular clique who have consistently used terrorist techniques, in 1919 as now. Irish popular hostility to British administration then arose more from brutal (and horrifying) reprisals after IRA atrocities than from any general "anti-colonial" anger among the population. That conflict was more of a civil war of secession than a war of "liberation" in the modern sense. The gambit of "provocation by atrocity" has failed wretchedly in the current Ulster troubles; which is why the terrorists resorted to their disastrous and abortive hunger-strike campaign.

[12] For example, *Ulster*. by the *Sunday Times* "Insight" Team (1972).

[13] Ireland personified as an old woman.

THOUGH THE British Army may have learned from history, many journalists and academics remain terrible suckers for the IRA revised version of it. We find Simon Winchester writing wearily in *The Sunday Times* about this "age-old problem", and a week later in the same newspaper a leader, riddled with fantasy, arguing that the "British presence" in this British province is "part of the problem", and recommending "withdrawal" regardless of any ensuing mass bloodshed.

IRA propaganda is the subject of the first essay in *British Perspectives*, a lucid analysis by Maurice Tugwell of how the Provisional IRA have managed to manipulate some areas of public opinion, using myth and atrocity-propaganda ground out by an experienced and well-organised publicity machine. The effort has been most successful in America; but it has had some effect in Britain too. Tugwell notes that the violent part of the campaign has sometimes been counter-productive (even among vicariously thrilled Irish-Americans) and has indeed pushed any sort of resolution of the troubles further away than ever.

Roughly the same conclusion—that the IRA's violence is self-defeating in terms of their goal—is expressed by E. Moxon-Browne in his chapter "The Water and the Fish", which purports to be a discussion of the Provisional IRA and public opinion in Northern Ireland. His conclusion does not follow naturally from the text, which attempts to explain the stubborn survival of the IRA purely in terms of Catholic grievances in Ulster, with no reference to the tradition of secret societies in Ireland, or to the family and social patterns of the Catholic poor (important factors, for example, in the survival of the Mafia in Sicily). He appears to believe that such a survival is unique in Europe, and leans heavily on vague popular analogies between the present troubles and those of 1919–22, referring to "old Mrs Johnson" (not otherwise identified) who "sees the British troops today in the very same street as the Black and Tans." One looks expectantly for some additional opinion from "poor old Granuaile" or perhaps the Shan Van Vocht.[13] Moxon-Browne cites also

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the results of a sloppily worded opinion-poll as evidence of support for the Provisionals and/or their "aims."

The issue of "popular support" is further discussed by Moxon-Browne in a chapter of *Terrorism: A Challenge to the State*.[14] Here again he gives the quote from "old Mrs Johnson." His attention should be called to another and more interesting quote from a *Sunday Times* journalist of Irish extraction, who mentioned the "expert and instant mendacity" deployed by Republicans and their sympathisers when talking to "interested parties." Here is a bit of extrapolation from the media used by Moxon-Browne to back up his fashionable Maoist metaphor of "water and fish":

> "If 3% support the IRA and another 5% give it acquiescence, there are 250,000 people ready to turn a blind eye. . . . Add to those the mass of people in any society who shrug away from involvement in things they do not like and the sea is large enough for any guerilla to swim in."

This virtuoso bit of speculative sociology was from *The Guardian*. Its starting-point was a demonstration in which it was claimed that some 7,000 people took part on behalf of the IRA. No further details are given; but our Belfast scholar is willing to accept *The Guardian*'s arbitrary chain of logic as serious evidence of widespread support for the IRA. Somehow, in both books, he manages to avoid any reference to the real "water" in which his piranha fish "swim." It is a population which far exceeds in size not only that of Ulster but of all Ireland: the American-Irish community whose awareness of Anglo-Irish affairs is framed by the 19th-century post-famine years and stops short about 1922. The result is that his loose arguments drift a little too often into advocacy of the Provisional IRA, or at least a parroting of its propaganda. I hope this was not the author's intention.

THE QUAINT SIMILE of the IRA as "something like a club, a trade union, or even a volunteer conventional army" is mooted by Edgar O'Ballance in his contribution to *British Perspectives* on "IRA Leadership Problems." Fortunately he does not pursue this bizarre fancy, concentrating instead on the Byzantine intramural jockeyings among the organisers of the IRA. He concludes with the group's reshaping on the European terrorist "cell" pattern. It is a change which does not, he says, suit the Irish terrorists very well, and impairs their relations with the community. It seems that the "Army" symbolism is very important to them, with its links to the earlier troubles, and its easy relating to civilians as a quasi-legitimate force. (O'Ballance's paper is by now out-of-date, with no reference to the "H-Block Campaign"; but it does make an interesting supplement to a more comprehensive treatment like that in Tim Pat Coogan's 1980 history *The IRA*.)

There is a good chapter by F. E. C. Gregory on how British police have adapted to the terrorist threat in Britain, laying stress on civil rights and the continuation of the Police as a non-political "third force" in the defence of society. (The other two are the Citizens and the Military.) New problems are underlined by the public relations difficulties over units like the Special Branch, or with D11, the trained marksmen who seem out of place in a force which prides itself on being unarmed.[15] Former Home Secretary Merlyn Rees briefly discusses the special laws on terrorism in Britain and the "Diplock Courts." Jillian Becker describes the Baader-Meinhof Gang as, of all things, a species of latter-day Hussites; and there is a short paper by Dr Clutterbuck on kidnapping. Clive Aston's chilling contribution describes the UN's farcical failure to draft and ratify a satisfactory convention against the taking of hostages: this paper should be required reading for all politicians, journalists, and editors who tend to look to the UN for a "solution" in Northern Ireland.

Paul Wilkinson concludes his collection with a set of proposals for "Government Responses to Terrorism", and touches in passing on a subject which deserves much more extensive treatment as an aspect of terrorism—the matter of public morale.

> "The greatest danger of all, in situations of severe and protracted challenge by terrorists, is that the moral integrity, will, and loyalty of a democracy can become eroded under the impact of general cynicism, with blind pursuit of self-interest by powerful groups . . . or the media allowing a voracious appetite for sensationalism to influence them in letting forces of law and order suffer consequences of media irresponsibility."

The concern expressed here would have been more convincing if Wilkinson had mentioned the self-interest and schizoid reasoning of many academics (some of which is on show in his own collection and, again, in *Terrorism: A Challenge to the State*) who, in their Flaubertian carelessness with *idées reçues*, excuse while pretending to explain. Philip Cerny's chapter on France in *Terrorism: A Challenge to the State* speaks of "a permissible sympathy with the underlying *cri de coeur*" that motivates

[14] *Terrorism: A Challenge to the State*. Edited by JULIET LODGE. Martin Robertson, £15.00.

[15] Like any law-enforcement agency, the British police have always recognised the occasional need for stronger means than persuasion and a wooden truncheon. They can be armed; but unlike most other forces, the British police commands do not issue firearms except in extreme or special cases, and not to all officers.

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terrorists, and drags out the specious argument that one can simultaneously "approve their aims and denounce their methods." Journalists, too, have a taste for this. In the Hamburg *Zeit* one could read recently that the new generation of young German terrorists also "mean well" but go about things "the wrong way." I am afraid I am only reminded of the Yorkshire Ripper whose murders were committed, as he said, "to make the world a cleaner, nicer place"; or indeed of Adolf Hitler who exterminated millions of Jews, gypsies, dissenters and other "undesirables" for the most meaningful of eugenic reasons, in order to purify the human race, make it bigger, better, stronger, etc. Why not express a "permissible sympathy" with all those admirable "underlying *cris de coeur*"? Would the journalists and the academics (and perhaps Mr Ken Livingstone of the Greater London Council) say unctuously, "While I do not condone the gas chambers, it must be remembered that these people are not really criminals, because they have after all a very strong political motivation. . ."? The schizophrenic procedure of wallowing in sympathy for the terrorist and his "aims" while uttering bland ritual condemnations of his "methods" suggests that he can be neatly divided up and sorted into packages, one marked "ideals" and one marked "corpses." The terrorist is not that kind of divisible entity, but a human being with the faculty of deliberate choice, in which aim and method are indissolubly joined. The matter of choice, with its awkward moral implications, is consistently overlooked by academics and journalists, to the emotional advantage of the terrorist. Without choice there is no responsibility, and therefore no blame and no punishment. There remains the facile acceptance of the idea that terrorism is only some tragically moving (and automatically determined) response to "underlying causes." Since all of us non-terrorists out here in the overground are part of these "causes", it naturally follows that we and not the terrorist must answer for his actions. He is innocent, his victims presumably guilty. Casualties are "regrettable." In the end, we must do as he says: Free the "freedom fighters" or give them "Political Status", "Get Out of Northern Ireland", etc., etc.

HOW SERIOUS ARE the obstacles to the control of terrorism which lie in the field of international cooperation (or non-cooperation)? They appear to rest on the difficulty of "defining the crime", something which has baffled the experts of the United Nations. It is explored in "Legal Responses to Terrorism", David Freestone's chapter in *Terrorism: A Challenge to the State*. He fights shy of accepting current legal definitions and accepts only that terrorist crime has been "defined for national purposes", while asserting that the political motives of terrorist crimes "render them different in kind" from other offences. I doubt whether "in kind" is the right way to put it, since one of the refrains of this work is the international discord over just what "kind" of crimes these are, and whether they are crimes at all. The problems of terrorism in Germany, Italy, and Holland reveal a similar bickering at national level. The crimes in question do appear as attacks on the sovereignty of the state by "sub-state actors" (as the jargon has it). Through a cruel paradox, it is precisely the conditions of state sovereignty which prevent any agreement on the principle of "Extradite or Try" when the "actors" are caught. If her book goes into a second edition, Ms Lodge might add a chapter on national exploitation of "non-state" terrorists for the subversion of other states. (The Arabs have certainly done this with the Palestinians against Israel; and the Republic of Ireland has come close to it in the pursuit of an irredentist claim on the six British counties of Ulster.)

On the testimony of all these writings, much of the effort to suppress or contain terrorism appears to be foundering in a morass of abstractions, sanctimony, and political chicanery. What *is* a political motive as opposed to a political excuse? Will our metaphysicians be able to guess how many corpses can dance on the pin of a hand-grenade? How is it that the intelligent John le Carré feels shame and anger over the SAS's defeat of Iranian terrorists? Why do certain Eire politicians assume a deliberately ambiguous attitude to a violent cabal which is in fact trying to undermine their own government? Whatever the answers mean to most of us, they resound far too often to the benefit of terrorists who, like their Jacobin forbears, recognise no answers, no rules and no goals beyond their own imperatives, while thriving upon the myths and false dichotomies spun out by journalists and academics in their "neutral no-man's-land." The terrorist knows better than they that there is no such place. In his battle every acre of the field belongs to someone: he plays his zero-sum game in this territory. It is like Harlan County in the old song, where there are no neutrals, no innocents, and no impartial judges. The terrorist surely appreciates the academics who deal in amoral abstractions (as he does), and also the journalists who share his overriding lust for attention; they are all honourable men. The terrorist is well aware that their determination to be impartial, honest, and neutral in his Harlan County ranges them behind him by default. And he has the keenest appreciation of the self-deception among such fair-minded people that turns their best efforts to his advantage. When he meets them on his battlefield, he does not need to ask, "Whose side are you on?" He knows.

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This Great Act of Forgetting

The Words of Religion— By ROBERT BURCHFIELD

"The Book of Common Prayer" we knew
Was that of 1662:
Though with-it sermons may be well,
Liturgical reforms are hell.

THUS W. H. AUDEN in a poem called "Doggerel by a Senior Citizen" written in 1969. These lines may be used as a convenient introduction to one of the most divisive cultural issues of the present century in the British Isles—the rightness or wrongness of meddling with what seemed on the face of it to be two unalterable legacies of the past, the Authorised Version of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer.

Let me start by quoting two quite ordinary remarks. "The Alternative Service Book is excellent for young girls busting to get out of church"—a young New Zealand visitor on the practical side of boarding-school chapel services. In other words, often-repeated ceremonies are best kept short. "The ASB is better because it is the language of today"—a middle-aged parishioner in an Oxfordshire village, troubled by the half-understood curiosities of 16th- and 17th-century English, and showing a commonsense relief that "*thou*", "*-eth*", and archaic meanings of words like "*incomprehensible*"[1] had been removed from her Prayer Book at last.

The publication of two new books[2] provides a convenient opportunity to re-examine the issues and to indicate the lines of battle.

For T. S. Eliot, the New Testament of the New English Bible was not even a work of distinguished mediocrity:

> "We are . . . entitled to expect from a panel chosen from among the most distinguished scholars of our day at least a work of distinguished mediocrity. When we find that we are offered something far below that modest level, something which astonishes in its combination of the vulgar, the trivial and the pedantic, we ask in alarm, 'What is happening to the English language?' . . ."
>
> *Sunday Telegraph*, 16 December 1962, p. 7.

He supported his views with examples, among them pairs of parallel translations, and in particular:

> "Neither cast ye your pearls before swine."
> (*Matt. 7:6, AV*)
>
> "Do not feed your pearls to pigs." (*NEB*, 1971)

Eliot dismissed the second sentence on two grounds: "The substitution of 'feed' for 'cast' makes the figure of speech ludicrous." "I should have thought . . . that the word 'swine' would be understood, not only by countryfolk who may have heard of 'swine fever', but even by the urban public, since it is still applied, I believe, to human beings as a term of abuse."[3]

> "Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement."
> (*Matt. 5:31, AV*)
>
> "A man who divorces his wife must give her a note of dismissal."
> (*NEB*, 1961. Unchanged in 1970.)

"The unlearned", Eliot remarked, "will marvel at the apparent facility with which the Hebrews could get rid of their wives. 'Bill of divorcement', even though it gives no clear notion of the processes required by Jewish law, at least sounds ceremonious."

THE *SUNDAY TELEGRAPH* is not a place where one would expect to find the higher realms of literary criticism or of linguistic philosophy displayed. Eliot did not attempt there to relate the sense of linguistic loss that he felt in the *NEB* to his earlier

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[1] "The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible . . . ." (The Athanasian Creed)

[2] *No Alternative: The Prayer Book Controversy*. Edited by DAVID MARTIN and PETER MULLEN. Basil Blackwell, £9.50, paper £3.95. *Liturgies and Trials: The Secularization of Religious Language*. By RICHARD K. FENN. Basil Blackwell, £12.00.

[3] The translators amended the verse in 1970, when the Old Testament and a revised translation of the New Testament were published, and it now reads "Do not throw your pearls to the pigs."

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doctrine of "dissociation of sensibility."[4] He simply asserted that the translation was an example of change for the worse:

> "It does not seem to have occurred to the mind of the anonymous author of this Introduction [to the *NEB*] that change can sometimes be for the worse, and that it is as much our business to attempt to arrest deterioration and combat corruption of our language, as to accept change."

The *NEB*, and the Book of Common Prayer—for he foresaw that the time would come when "the Collects of Cranmer are revised for use in Anglican churches, to make them conform to 'contemporary English' "—in his eyes were trigonometrical points in a complex linguistic grid. Move them and the whole system is dislocated.

DR C. H. DODD, chairman of the panel of translators of the New English Bible, described the work of the panel in the Oxford University Press's house magazine *The Periodical* (Spring 1970, p. 177). Two paragraphs are of central importance:

> "The impulse which set it [the *NEB*] going came from a concern in the British Churches that the Bible in its traditional version—the Old English Bible we might call it—was simply not communicating with the present generation.
>
> The concern was brought into the open at the end of the last War by a group of Scottish army chaplains, who reported that the young men in the forces found the language of the Old English Bible largely unintelligible, and anyhow remote and unreal. . . . It was widely agreed that there was need for a new version which should speak to people of today in the language of today."

Professor Sir Godfrey Driver took a straightforward scholarly view of the new translation of the Old Testament. Inaccuracies needed to be removed, especially in the rendering of terms to do with the day-to-day life and the flora and fauna of ancient times. The panel of scholars returned to the original texts and translated them in the way that scholars have translated and retranslated the *Odyssey* and *Beowulf* during the last two centuries or so. Thus:

> "Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets, as a wild bull in a net."
>
> *Isaiah 51:20 (AV)*

> "Your sons are in a stupor, they lie at the head of every street, like antelopes caught in the net."
>
> *(NEB)*

> "The fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver" [eaten in a time of famine].
>
> *II Kings 6:25 (AV)*

> "A quarter of a kab of locust-beans for five shekels."
>
> *(NEB)*

ROBERT GRAVES THOUGHT that the translators of the *NEB* "had patched an old garment rather than woven a new one":

> "Modern ecclesiasticism cannot tolerate a Tyndale. He will no longer be strangled and burned at the stake . . . but simply ignored. If a new translation is needed, the invidious task of authorship must be shared among a number of highly placed theologians, whose majority decision will flatten out any intrusive personal style. The New English Bible is thus a literary freak: a book without a writer."
>
> *The Observer*, 19 March 1961, p. 21.

The Times Literary Supplement's anonymous reviewer of the *NEB* (24 March 1961) contrasted the "explosive expansion" of the English language in the 16th century and the willingness of the people to absorb it with the unabsorbed linguistic expansion of the present century:

> "When the Authorized Version . . . was first published in 1611, the climate was in all ways favourable for it to be a great book. The English language had lately known an explosive expansion. New words and rhythms and cadences had been moulded by poets and prose-writers. . . . More, the Authorized Version came to a people passionately interested in religion. . . .
>
> Today's new Bible . . . has been made in a different climate. Again our vocabulary has explosively expanded but not, this time, with words or phrases that could aid the translators; neither the language of science nor that of popular culture could contribute. Nor, by the lay public, is a new Bible in English consciously desired. The literate, whether religious or not, are steeped in and satisfied by the language of the Authorized Version. There is little evidence that the semi-literate are actively curious about Christianity."

Reviewer after reviewer took the same line. Our 20th-century language was considered unsuitable for the majestic cadences of the Bible and the Prayer Book. Certainly, it was thought, the new version would not last:

> "Nor can this strenuous attempt to convey the archaic thought-patterns of the New Testament into 'the natural vocabulary, constructions, and rhythms of contemporary speech' hope for much permanence in view of the relative speed of linguistic change in the English vernacular."[5]

[4] First enunciated by Eliot in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 20 October 1921, p. 669, and of course taken up by other writers later.

[5] C. L. Wrenn in *Notes & Queries* (January 1962, p. 33).

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TWENTY YEARS LATER everything has changed, and the defenders of the Authorised Version and of the Book of Common Prayer speak with dispirited or at any rate with more strident voices. Those opposed to change seemed hardly to recognise the speed and potency of the movement for liturgical reform, and when it became evident in 1979 that a new Alternative Service Book, the culmination of half a century of experimentation, was to be introduced the following year, the storm broke. Nowhere is the sense of outrage more powerfully expressed than in the now famous issue of *PN Review 13* (1979). It bristles with protest and with a sense of appalling loss:

> "We, the undersigned, are deeply concerned by the policies and tendencies which decree the loss of both the Authorised Version of the English Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. This great act of forgetting, now under way, is a tragic loss to our historic memory and an impoverishment of present awareness. For centuries these texts have carried forward the freshness and simplicity of our language in its early modern splendour. Without them the resources of expression are reduced, the stock of shared words depleted, and we ourselves diminished. Moreover, they contain nothing which cannot be easily and profitably explained."[6]

IT IS INSTRUCTIVE to go back a little and see how this point of crisis had been reached. There had, of course, been many warning signals. A movement towards liturgical reform began with the Ritualist Movement of the last century. It was influenced by several developments:

> The spread of the Church of England to many parts of the world, and the consequent production of new prayer books abroad.
>
> The Ecumenical Movement and the consequent wish for a closer similarity of worship amongst different denominations.
>
> The Parish and People Movement which aimed to bring a whole parish together at one service (the Eucharist) instead of having separate congregations at a multiplicity of services (Mattins, Evensong, Holy Communion, etc.).
>
> Advances in liturgical and theological scholarship which made liturgists eager to try to refashion the liturgy on newly discovered primitive models and to incorporate modern theological discoveries.
>
> The spirit of the age, namely that young and in particular unbookish people, not familiar with the ways of 16th- and 17th-century English, needed modern vocabulary for their devotional practices, and needed a more corporate (rather than individual) manner of worshipping.

In 1928 a revised Prayer Book, approved by the Church Assembly, was rejected by the House of Commons but published as a private book (the so-called "deposited book"). Between 1965 and 1971, Series 1, 2, and 3 were issued as experimental alternative forms of service, and the *ASB* itself was published in 1980.

During this period some of the most memorable words and phrases in the *BCP* were replaced by others, and ancient and venerated points of accidence and syntax were removed:

> *Our Father, which art in heaven*
> *Our Father in heaven*
>
> *He ascended into heaven, and sitteth . . .*
> *He ascended into heaven, and is seated . . .*
>
> *Thereto I plight thee my troth*
> *This is my solemn vow*
>
> *With all my worldly goods I thee endow*
> *All that I have I share with you*

The editor and contributors to *No Alternative* will have none of this.

> "As fast as the theologians rejected ancient doctrines, saying 'but that I can't believe', the liturgiologists disembowelled the language of the Book of Common Prayer and the Bible in which these doctrines were set. Equally minimalist, they produced in its place the bland literalisms of Series 3 and the ASB. After thousands of hours of quibbling compromise and revisionary pamphleteering, the Liturgical Commission has at last delivered a dull summa of literalisms, expunging from the language of worship all that poetry and metaphor by which the soul at prayer sensed the inexpressible. In the Book of Common Prayer, by contrast, images of transcendence are built up from the shape of the sentences and the sound of the words." (pp. vii–viii)

RICHARD K. FENN was obviously writing *Liturgies and Trials* when he was invited to contribute to *PN Review 13*. Except for an introductory passage, chapter 2 of the book repeats his earlier article "The Political Dimension of the Liturgy" verbatim. It is a strange performance. He lurches about

[6] A Petition to the Right Reverend Fathers-in-God, the Clergy, and Laity of the General Synod of the Church of England. A 6-page list of names and designations is given, including Kingsley Amis, Lord Blake, Christopher Fry, Joyce Grenfell, Professor Richard Gombrich, General Sir John Hackett, Marghanita Laski, Iris Murdoch, Dr John Rae, Dame Freya Stark, Sir Ronald Syme, and Dame Rebecca West.

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from theme to theme, as sociologists tend to do, and uses rebarbative language in the process—the statement "Jesus is lord" is a "speech event" and part of the "eventful speech of religious ritual."

> "I will use the term 'eventful' to point to the distance between seminar talk (as an example of ordinary discourse) and liturgical speech: the former being talk in which nothing happens, the latter being speech in which the sacred happens." (p. 83)

The territory of a sociologist like Professor Fenn is limitless. His book is littered with references:

> "as Cox (1977:18) noted of a young woman chanting in Arabic while dancing in the Sufi tradition. . . ."
>
> "Troeltsch's first claim that every major religion carries within itself a 'general fundamental sociological theory' . . . (Troeltsch 1931; 1960:30). . . ."
>
> "Merleau-Ponty (1974:314) argues that 'action would not bring some sort of finality to the whole enterprise of the past, if it did not give the drama its last act'. . . ."
>
> "Richard Nixon. . . . Karen Ann Quinlan. . . . the Superior Court of New Jersey. . . ."

There is no end to it all and Professor Martin and his colleagues must regard him rather in the way that Mr Michael Foot regards the Militant Tendency. His task is to *account for* (Professor Fenn keeps italicising words, so why shouldn't I?) the secularisation of religious language. In an awkward, lumbering, and verbose way he does; and he blames "literary critics, liturgical scholars, and academics" for the calamity. "Eventful speech" has been turned into "seminar talk" because of a kind of *trahison des académiques*.

ONE CAN OFTEN SEE with hindsight that small areas of erosion are advance warnings of imminent and catastrophic changes to the whole landscape, and the landscape of religion is no exception. Two examples must suffice.

At various times in the present century, verses of some of the best known hymns, once thought suitable, became virtually outmoded and disused. Thus, for example, the verse

> *The rich man in his castle,*
> *The poor man at his gate,*
> *God made them, high or lowly,*
> *And order'd their estate*

from the Victorian hymn "All Things Bright and Beautiful" (by Cecil Frances Alexander) was omitted from the standard edition of Hymns Ancient and Modern in 1950.

Another area of erosion is that of the virtual disappearance of classes and groups of people able to quote the text of the *BCP* from memory. In Isabel Colegate's novel, *The Shooting Party* (1980), set before the 1914-18 War, there is an accident when a beater is shot during a shooting party. The beater, a rough countryman and known to be a poacher, begs the landowner, host of the shooting party, to pray for him:

> " 'Give me a prayer, sir. Don't deny me that. It's your way to pray—'tis you that orders up the prayers in Church, the Vicar only prays what prayers you tell him to. . . .'
>
> 'If that's what you want, Tom.' Sir Randolph put his hand on Tom's shoulder, cleared his throat and repeated last Sunday's Collect at high speed—in fact, such was his embarrassment, he more or less gabbled it."
>
> (Penguin ed., 1982, p. 173)

It is part of "this great act of forgetting" that the educated laity can no longer be relied on to remember the Collects in the *BCP* and the "rough countrymen" have stepped in with their new and more immediately intelligible versions.

Linguistic change is unstoppable. The period of recorded English since the early 8th century is scarred by changes—breakages, eruptions, and dislocations—of every kind. Paradoxically the scarrings are forgotten as time goes on and at any given time only a comparatively small area of language is regarded (though vociferously regarded) as controversial (*like* used as a conjunction, the pronunciation of *-arily*, etc.). But deliberate alterations of ceremonial language are another matter altogether, and it is not at all surprising that Professor David Martin and others are dismayed by what they regard as unforgivable acts of liturgical and linguistic vandalism. They are right to be dismayed, even though it is too late for any remedy to be found. The sense of suffering and of irrevocability is best expressed by Iris Murdoch in *PN Review 13*:

> "We live continually in and through words. Memories of words, poetic and sacred, travel with us through life. The loss of lively and natural access to the Authorised Version of the Bible and Cranmer's Book of Common Prayer is a literary loss comparable to losing touch with Shakespeare. It is also, whether or not one believes in God, a spiritual loss. Good works of art convey wisdom and understanding, and make places and spaces for pure unselfish contemplation and recollection. The great traditional words of the Bible and the Prayer Book are high instances of sacred art, of beauty as sacrament. These words have been treasured and understood for centuries by people whose use made of them timeless language, perfectly comprehensible and illuminating, a part of ordinary life for educated and uneducated alike. Now an ephemeral parochial 'modernism'

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threatens to cut us off from these sources of spiritual and literary nourishment. Such a loss could be irrevocable. I cannot imagine that believers and unbelievers will be able to 'live by' the new texts as they did by the old. The Bible and the Prayer Book were great pieces of literary good fortune, when language and spirit conjoined to produce a high unique religious eloquence. These books have been *loved* because of their inspired linguistic perfection. Treasured words encourage, console and save."

Words like *vouchsafe, prevent* (=come before), *fret* (=to eat), *persecute* (=pursue), *vex* (=afflict), and *incomprehensible* (=unknowable), and the passages in which they were once placed in the *AV* and the *BCP*, are in the process of being put away in less accessible storerooms. They will be brought out and dusted less and less as time goes on except by professional scholars and other educated people. The loss for our society—not so much of particular words as of the way they are put together—is grievous beyond all knowing.

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Melvin J. Lasky's *Utopia and Revolution* (1977) is published in Britain by Macmillan and by the University of Chicago Press in the US, in a paperback edition.

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Thoughts on Listening to Wally Fawkes

On a Jazz Musician—By JOHN WAIN

MR WALLY FAWKES is an artist with two distinct, though at some points overlapping, audiences. To a very large number of admirers he is known as a brilliant cartoonist on political and social themes, working under the name of "Trog"; to the handful of devotees who follow traditional jazz, he is appreciated as a virtuoso performer in that field, his instruments being the clarinet and the soprano saxophone. A faithful few dozen trek for miles to hear him in the hot, crowded bar of a London pub, where he plays on Sunday evenings with a group known as the Crouch End All Stars.

His playing suggests Sidney Bechet, and is meant to. This is not going to be an essay on traditional jazz or any kind of jazz. That music grew up in the early years of this century and if it can't survive till the end of it without people writing essays, it will die anyway. If anyone who reads this does not know what Sidney Bechet sounded like, and would like to know, records are very easily available. Let it simply be said that Bechet, who died some twenty years ago, was the greatest of those who played jazz in a Southern fashion. The country of its origin being so large, there are regional variations in jazz; it was invented, as we all know by this time, in the Mississippi Delta, and the musicians who played it worked largely in what were known, by an endearing euphemism, as sporting houses. When these were closed down by the US Navy in the First World War, presumably to protect the morals and health of the large number of young recruits stationed in the area, the music moved north; and when it got to Chicago and was played by a new wave of musicians, many of them white, it changed its tone and became harder, more staccato, full of the raw energy of the Chicago of Al Capone and the cutting edge of the wind blowing in over the lake. But Southern jazz has an ease, a flow, a relaxation—you could hear some of it in Louis Armstrong, right to the end—which contrives to suggest that the musicians could go on playing all through a warm velvety night without too much fatigue. It has energy rather than nervous tension, warm Southern lyricism rather than the frenetic inventiveness of the big city, especially as played by the gifted and generous-spirited Bechet.

Bechet was the first, or nearly the first, American jazz musician to come across the Atlantic; he visited England in 1919 and fascinated the public at the Hammersmith *Palais de Danse*. He also spent about the last ten years of his life on European soil, becoming an institutional figure in French popular music. He must have influenced many players, but only two, the American Bob Wilber and the Englishman Wally Fawkes, have contrived to sound very much like him; and when Bechet visited England again in the late 1940s and heard the youthful Fawkes, he is said to have remarked, "There goes my shadow."

The music of Sidney Bechet, then, can be listened to in the 1980s not merely on plentiful recordings but, as mediated by Wally Fawkes, in a North London pub on Sunday nights. (And elsewhere, of course, from time to time.) And this simple fact is enough to arouse certain thoughts in me, which I propose to share with the reader in a form close to free-wheeling reflection, day-dreaming almost.

LET ME START with the audience, and in particular with the real devotees, the faces that show up every week in that clamorous pub amid the fag-smoke and the smell of fried food. It is they and their kind, after all, who are the main subject of Philip Larkin's classic poem "To Sidney Bechet." That poem, it will be remembered, begins with a lucid and graceful tribute to Bechet's music, but immediately passes to its real subject, the English, white, middle-class public for that music.

> *That note you hold, narrowing and rising, shakes*
> *Like New Orleans reflected in the water,*
> *And in each heart appropriate falsehood wakes.*

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Boswell once declared with enthusiasm that when he heard a certain piece of stirring martial music, it filled his soul with a longing to rush on to the field of battle, mindful of nothing but death or glory. Johnson's reply was, "Sir, if it made me such a fool, I should never hear it." One's sympathies here are with Boswell, for after all music, or at any rate some music, exists to make us dream, and fill us with unattainable longings, and therefore inevitably with illusions; music will, if we let it, make fools of us, and quite rightly. (Johnson was tone-deaf, and was also admonishing a friend whom he considered, justly, to be in need of moral and emotional ballast.) So Larkin sees the devotees of Sidney Bechet's music as being each one in the grip of a separate dream, sometimes of an Arcadian nature ("Everyone making love and going shares") and sometimes tinged with a Baudelairean decadence ("sporting-house girls like circus tigers, priced/Far above rubies"). But in any event, a dream. And here, the poet has of course taken hold of a very real, and very large, subject. Music becomes important, even to non-musical people, when it ministers to their mental images, when it nourishes their secret, and not so secret, dreams.

In proof of which, I have only to look at the change in mass-produced popular music that has come about in my own lifetime. In the later 1930s, when I was twelve or thirteen (an age at which one listens very seriously to popular music), the fashion was all for well-drilled big bands with brass and reed sections blasting out banal but careful arrangements, the musicians attired in identical uniforms, the "leader" out in front pretending to conduct, the whole giving the impression of a large, well-tended, lubricated machine. It was the era of the Means Test and the fish-and-chip shop, and people wanted something that would be the *opposite* of their ordinary lives. They listened to these machine-bands just as they lined up outside the huge factory-like cinemas which sold them dreams of beautiful people floating about in large cars or virile men socking each other on the jaw. When the change in mass psychology happened in the late '50s, the big bands abruptly died and from now on the hero was the boy next door, tunelessly strumming on a guitar and singing through his adenoids. The 1930s wanted something completely remote from what they could do for themselves; the '60s wanted a reflection of exactly those things they might do for themselves, the more amateurish and home-made the better, as if the new youth-centred culture refused to make a hero of any artist whose attainments were above average—the "average" being what, with a bit of luck and a bit of perseverance, they might dream of doing themselves.

Amid all this, jazz tended to get lost because while on the one hand it is based on the patterns of popular music and is not part of the official high culture, on the other hand the jazz musician is a virtuoso. Only a very gifted person, willing to devote many years of discipline to it, could end up playing like Coleman Hawkins or Earl Hines or, to keep in sight of our first example, Sidney Bechet. And the lure of pop-and-rock was and is largely due to the fact that it seems to hold out a promise of by-passing these years of discipline. Ours is the first age in the history of the world in which it has been possible to make a fortune out of music without actually being a musician.

Nevertheless, though jazz may have got lost on the wider scene, it was held on to very tenaciously by a small devoted public, about as numerous as the people who go to an evening of Lithuanian folk-dancing or an exhibition of Mexican ceramics. If my view of the matter is right, it follows that jazz must have ministered to the mental images of these people, fed their dreams, awakened "appropriate falsehood" in them. And indeed I can testify that this is so. I became interested in jazz in 1940, and therefore belong to that generation who crowded into the War-time jazz clubs and fuelled, indeed made, the post-War English phenomenon known in retrospect as "the trad revival", though all we thought we were doing was listening to genuine jazz when we could find it.

Wally Fawkes was a founding father of the trad revival, having played with George Webb's Dixielanders, the band that more or less sparked it all off. The origin of this movement, I believe, was not revivalist in essence, but puristic. (The two are often associated but never entirely coextensive.) Since its first appearance, jazz had been consistently exploited, vulgarised and diluted to make it commercially attractive. In harking back to the early days, the trad revivalists were after all only going back twenty-five years, say from 1945 to 1920, and to the springtime of a music that must have seemed to them to have entered its overblown midsummer. I say "must have seemed to them", but I mean of course "did actually seem to us", since I was there and remember it all.

In a world of machine-made dance music that derived from jazz, our attitude in turning back to the days of the pure well-spring, to the youth of musicians like Louis Armstrong who then, in mid-career, seemed to us compromising dotards, was in fact pastoral. The musicians we admired, and about whom we eagerly paraded scraps of information ("No, no, Bunk Johnson wasn't on that session", etc., etc.), were remote from us in time

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and place, and we romanticised them. Our mental picture of Buddy Bolden and Kid Ory and Freddy Keppard bore much the same relation to real people as Dresden figures bear to real shepherds. But Dresden figures are real too; they represent images and ideals that play their part in moving the inert mass of the world.

Thus, we seized on the fact that our idols had mostly lived (and even the successsful ones had started) in poverty and under-privilege. (Louis Armstrong had learnt to play the cornet in a Waif's Home in New Orleans; Bessie Smith had, or at any rate we unshakeably believed she had, bled to death outside a white hospital; Johnny Dodds, a superb clarinet player, had to the end of his life carried his clarinet wrapped in newspaper because he could not afford a case for it, and so on.) The poverty of these artists was their guarantee of authenticity; they could never become smooth and glossy, they were sturdy outlaws, at home only in the Sherwood Forest of their art. We harped endlessly on the fact that many of them could not even read music. In playing traditional jazz, an ability to read music is a doubtful advantage anyway, since the basic patterns are very simple and the interest is all in the improvisation. But to us, this musical illiteracy was an important symbol, since it meant that our idols could not even have applied for jobs in the factory-turned orchestras we disliked so much. We relished stories such as that about the black banjoist who, when shown a transcription of one of his solos, taken down from a record, admiringly held it upside down and exclaimed, "Did I play all that? . . ."

THESE MUSICIANS, then, so completely different from us in background, in race, in geographical location, spoke to us because they symbolised certain important things in our lives—or, at any rate, things we would have liked to be important in them. Chief of these, I think, were freedom and individuality.

The individuality, I suppose, scarcely needs comment, since it is the most conspicuous feature of the music. In every other form, the performer is the mouthpiece of the composer; in jazz, the performer *is* the composer. Once again Larkin found the exact words for us—

> *What calls me is that lifted, rough-tongued bell*
> *(Art, if you like) whose individual voice*
> *Insists I too am individual.*

The theme of freedom is, naturally, tied in with that of individuality but goes beyond it. For those of us who were adolescent in 1940, life was cramped and discipline harsh. Our middle-class parents sat on us heavily "for our own good", we were educated by a generation of schoolmasters who expected unquestioning obedience; and when our school-days came to an end we had, if we were fit, no option but to be swallowed into the maw of one or other of the armed services. We seemed to spend our lives working hard to build foundations for a future that we might not even live to see (and indeed many of my generation did not live to see it). I am not blaming anybody for this, not even Hitler, but the fact remains that our life was heavily disciplined and directed. Small wonder that we romanticised the vagabond life of the jazz musician, who seemed to have the freedom of those who have fallen through the bottom of the system. We saw these figures, of course, at a romantic distance and through a veil of ignorance; we knew nothing of the constant misery and humiliation involved then in being a black American, nor of the insecurity of employment, the exploitation that inevitably followed from working in night-clubs run by gangsters, and the rest of the long, weary struggle that wore out so many of the men we admired.

I SAY we "knew nothing of" this grinding misery and victimisation, and this is true in the sense that such knowledge of it as we had was a garnish, a sauce to our appreciation, a romantic myth that we wove around the sounds that enchanted us. We enjoyed, and fiercely insisted on, the fact that our idols had, and could have, no part in the ordinary belly-selfish pushing and shoving for material success that was enjoined on us by our elders. We wanted to see them as the rejects of the system because we, harried and pushed around, shouted at by drill-sergeants, queueing to register for this and that, endlessly going through the hoop of tests and selections and medicals, being graded like cattle at a market, inwardly thought of ourselves as the victims of a society that, whatever it was intent on, was not intent on *our* welfare. (The world always seems like this to adolescents, but in the first few years of the 1940s the view was more justifiable than it sometimes is.)

In short, it was our own self-pity that we projected on these distant jazz musicians, who would have found us and our way of life entirely strange. We identified with them, and the means of identification was partly that we saw both them and ourselves as enemies of the machine-society. But this was not a protest movement. Our interest was much closer to the purely aesthetic. In the forty years that have gone by since, "protest" has become a more or less permanent part of the scene. Prosperity, when we had it, engendered a (deeply guilty?) wish to ape the poorest and least privileged people in the world, and to share their sanctity. And even though the flame of our own prosperity is burning low at the moment, the

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impulse is still there in a dimmed form, ready to leap up again when conditions are right. Even now, the prosperous suburbs of all Western cities are full of young people who have never gone short of anything material in their lives, walking about wearing shirts bearing prison numbers and with lettering like SO-AND-SO STATE PENITENTIARY: NOT TO BE WORN OUTSIDE THE PRISON, etc., etc. It matters little whether these are genuine prison shirts or whether they have been made by some astute *entrepreneur* who knows his markets. What is true in either case is that the well-fed young people who wear them are in effect mocking the poor wretches who are actually in prison, just as the people who go about in trendy Third World gear are not actually doing much for the Third World.

By contrast, jazz is not and never has been a protest music, though in a world that so highly values the art of poor and uncultivated people, its devotees have not been slow to point out that this is one of its claims to consideration. It is something subtler than protest; it is an imposition of the will of the black man on that of the white, the will of the subject on that of the master. Even, you might say, of the conquered on the conqueror: if the South instead of the North had won the American Civil War, jazz would doubtless have been a very different music, if it had arisen at all, for it was the disbanding of the Confederate armies, and the selling-off at dirt prices of their equipment, that enabled the blacks to get their hands at last on musical instruments. And the instruments they got were of course the ones that traditional jazz most favours to this day, trumpet, trombone, clarinet, the military band instruments. One war provided the instruments; the next dispersed the musicians from their enclave into society in general; and the next, by bringing the GIs to Europe, contributed to its international spread (though not crucially, for this was already well advanced by 1930).

BORN AMID oppression, seed-borne by wars, jazz is typically a child of the last hundred years of chaos and upheaval; as much so as Surrealism or the modernist movement in poetry. It is important to notice, too, that with the passage of time it has become entirely a music of *epigoni*. The race that produced traditional jazz has disowned it. The shortness of jazz history has tended slightly to obscure this fact, because a musician like Louis Armstrong (whom Larkin calls "both the Chaucer and Shakespeare of jazz") was pioneering the music in the 1920s and still playing it in substantially the same way in the '60s; but as the older masters died out, they were replaced not by men of their own race and provenance but by white, and essentially middle-class, disciples.

Black musicians, in short, take no interest in traditional jazz and probably dislike it. They have a vested interest in social change because social change is the only power that will improve their lot, and "trad" represents a harking-back that they must find at best irrelevant and at worst offensive. The scholars, the collectors, the connoisseurs, are white and an actual majority of them are not even American, but English and Northern European.

Jazz, then, at any rate jazz in its original form, has become a white, middle-class, predominantly European form of music. And here we come back to Wally Fawkes and the group who play with him. To watch this group of musicians, all of whom belong to the decision-making professional class and, during their working week, spend a lot of their time telling other people what to do—to watch this group belting out a twelve-bar blues or a street march is to be present at a very unlikely historical event. This music has travelled a long distance across the face of the earth, and an even longer distance in (using the word in its anthropological sense) culture. The musicians who play it today and those who played it in *c.* 1925 are so far apart that if they could meet they would communicate only through their music and hardly at all outside it.

AT FIRST SIGHT there would seem to be parallels. The late medieval ballads, product of a society part tribal, part feudal and in any case static, had a second blossoming in the Romantic period of literature and art. But the parallel does not survive inspection.

When Keats wrote "La Belle Dame Sans Merci", or Coleridge "The Ancient Mariner", they were both acknowledging an influence and delighting in an enchantment. They were not trying to produce an exact facsimile of the older poetry they savoured so strongly. If you had told either one of them that his poem was indistinguishable from a 15th-century border ballad, he would not have found the comment flattering because his actual aim was to be modern in terms of the beginning of the 19th century. In fact medieval songs and ballads only became popular among *cognoscenti* once the society had evolved far enough for them to be seen as distinctively something *else*. In Elizabethan England there must have been plenty of people in remote farmhouses and isolated villages singing what were effectively medieval songs, but these were not reviving anything, they were merely keeping alive what was familiar to them, a very different story. The collectors went out in the mid-18th century—that is, when the society had already become commercial and even, in its initial phase, industrial, and when

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something like big-city life had begun to develop. They relished what they found because it spoke to them of an age that was irretrievably in the past.

The traditionalist jazz musician also knows that what he contemplates is in the past ("Building for some a legendary quarter") but his aim is to play that ancient music very exactly; the Crouch End All Stars would, I am sure, be pleased to be told that they sounded indistinguishable from the Louis Armstrong, the Johnny Dodds, the Kid Ory, the Johnny St. Cyr, of 60 years ago.

JAZZ IS AN ART that has always meant a great deal to me, but when I try to play the familiar game of generalising from it to the other arts I am acquainted with, I always run up against its unique features. Or are they unique? One of the features of jazz in my lifetime (and certainly my adult lifetime) has been that it has produced a vast number of unknown practitioners who are the equal, or very nearly the equal, of those with the world reputations. When my friends and I were growing up and forming our taste, we knew (via records) the work of perhaps a hundred musicians in jazz, mostly American and mostly born between 1900 and 1915. But right from the beginning, in the back rooms of pubs and at impromptu gatherings in friends' houses, one began to hear musicians who, if they had been put down among the right company at the right time, would have sounded just as authoritative. I used to hear, and still frequently do hear, jazz musicians who are as imaginative, as skilled, as inventive as those who were my idols in those growing-up years. To be born an American, and to be in one of the key places—New Orleans, Chicago, New York, Kansas City—at the strategic time, was to be carried upward on a thermal; and in view of everything these musicians had to put up with and the magnificent contribution they made to music, no one would grudge them that thermal.

But the music can exist without the thermal. If you drive into the city of Stoke-on-Trent from the direction of Stafford—having just come, let us say, from the M6 motorway—you very soon reach a divergence where one main road goes to Stoke itself and the other to Newcastle-under-Lyme. If you take the Newcastle road, within a hundred yards you pass on the left a totally undistinguished one-storey building well-known for yards around as Trent Vale Church Institute, which provides the modest venue for the blameless social activities of Trent Vale Parish Church, nearly opposite on the other side of the road. To this building I used to repair on Saturday nights in 1941 and '42, to listen and dance to the music of a seven- or eight-piece band whose name escapes me; but I shall never forget the name of its trumpet player, Ken Hand. A slightly built fellow with wavy fair hair and a dreamy exterior, Ken Hand played trumpet jazz that would have made him, had chance put him there, welcome beside Bunny Berigan and Jimmy McPartland. Saturday after Saturday, at that formative time in my life, I knew myself in the presence of great living jazz, just as I know it with Wally Fawkes today. In particular Ken Hand did a virtuoso solo rendering of *Georgia on My Mind*, Hoagy Carmichael's wistful little tune which in those days was just part of the repertory of dance bands but now, since Georgia sent a President to the White House and got grand ideas, has been adopted as the official anthem of the state. I hear that "lifted, rough-tongued bell" across the years.

Of course, if I went down to Trent Vale Institute next Saturday night I should find the local adolescents still listening to their favourite music and still idolising the musicians. But with this difference. It is not a supposition, it is an absolute certainty, that none of the musicians they are listening to will have the fierce dedication, the superbly confident virtuosity, that Ken Hand had. He was destined, of course, for a professional career; and I do know that he became a member of one of the name-bands of the period, because I ran into him in the street some years later, in a city a long way from Stoke-on-Trent, and he was there on tour with this successful and (I hope) generously-paying orchestra. What happened then, I don't know. We were never "in touch." He was a musician and I was a humbly adoring listener, as I am with Wally Fawkes.

This question of being in the right place at the right time continues to haunt me. If Ken Hand was really the equal of, say, Bunny Berigan, then the reason why Bunny Berigan had an immense reputation and is still remembered in jazz circles, whereas I never met anyone who had heard of Ken Hand, must be simply a matter of chance: one was where it counted to be, bringing jazz to millions of listeners on a weekly coast-to-coast radio hook-up, and the other was playing at Trent Vale Institute. Does this situation exist in other arts? Are there, so to speak, Ken Hand painters and Ken Hand poets? I don't know in detail how the art world is organised (very clumsily, I suspect) but in the case of poetry I can report a distinct suspicion that there *are* Ken Hands about. Poetry, being in our time a minority art with no significant paying public, tends to "succeed" or "fail" in terms of publication and promotion according to whether the poet is taken up by the small but highly efficient and totally unsleeping Mafia who control the poetry reviewing in the weekly papers and act as poetry advisers to publishing houses. Some of the people who have conventional reputations as poets are actually of unusual gifts and one or two have genius, but most of them are distinguishable

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from dedicated but totally unknown poets only by the fact that they get their work into circulation, and this they do by being in the right places at the right times and not stepping too far out of line.

By contrast, the world of jazz is genial and welcoming, because the musicians who play it are catering for a genuine need; there are people like myself, not very many in number but interested and (I hope) discriminating, who go to hear the music because it fulfils a need in us, not because we feel we ought to or because it will put us into any kind of swim. It must be a long time since jazz, of any kind, represented a "swim"; and one can only shake a disbelieving head at the incontrovertible fact that the lifetime of Scott Fitzgerald, the frenetic 1920s with dancing on tables and a non-stop chase from night-club to night-club, was dubbed by the publicity machine of those days "the Jazz Age." The music associated with that period, mostly Paul Whiteman and the Josephine Baker kind of cabaret number, seems to us hardly jazz at all.

Yet somehow real jazz came through all that, and survives into the impossible 1980s, right up against the threshold of the Orwellian nightmare; survives to plough its unique furrow; a popular-based music, yet a music of connoisseurs; simple in outline but in detailed execution rewardingly complex; giving scope for the expression of individuality but also of a wonderful group inventiveness when the spirit seems to pass from one to another as at a Quaker meeting; a music understood and performed by university dons, doctors, administrators (one of the best living jazz musicians is a High Court judge, our best jazz critic is also our best living poet). While modern jazz goes I don't know where—it passed the *Finnegans Wake* stage ten years ago, with Albert Ayler—and while rock-and-pop continue to squander the legacy of the twelve-bar blues like a feeble-minded heir succeeding to the wealth of some great aristocrat, jazz goes on, as strongly and inventively as ever, but in a soap-bubble, an evanescent globe of generation, class, culture, that somehow strikes me as threatened. Will it last my time? It should do. The social conditions that produced it have gone, but then the social conditions that produced 18th-century string quartets have gone, and the music lives for our delight. Ken Hand, where are you?

Cats and all

for Christina Gascoigne

It has to be said first that all the best lovers
Love cats. Perhaps it's their tact, perhaps it's
Their grace, perhaps the fact that cats
Have the art of being stupid but always a pleasure.
Possibly, too, that they know when to stay
Allow themselves a small space on the bed
When the hurt is worst; and also when to go—
The quiet small asking to leave at six
When they have their other affairs, and know
You have yours as well. In the dark nights
No lover of cats imagines they're all the same
Grey. They shine and are brilliant at being
Exactly what we should want to see and feel.
I hope if I lack a lover, leaving this world,
I might have a cat to tactfully lead me through
The difficult business of losing and going
With charm and enough grace to be fierce,
With the claws in though the eyes sharp.

Gay Clifford

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IN THE MARGIN

John Reed & Alger Hiss

Two Cases in Ideology—By MELVIN J. LASKY

Reds in the Waxworks

A FUNNY THING sometimes happens on the way from the cinema: take the spectacular case of a politico-historical film like Warren Beatty's *Reds*. Tens of millions are spent on the making of it, millions of movie-goers crowd in to see it, but in the wake of the publicity, the prizes, and the possible pleasures of the production, there remain only two or three isolated reviews which merit the name film criticism. Apart from a piece by Ferdinand Mount in these columns, a well-researched essay by Richard Grenier in *Commentary*, some reflections by Dan Bell in *Partisan Review*, little else has caught my eye; a few acid drops in an ocean of soppiness. And yet few recent films more than *Reds*—which purports to tell the story of John Reed's *Ten Days that Shook the World* (which, in turn, purported with the same naive measure of romantic distortion to tell the story of the Bolshevik *putsch* of October 1917)—call for thoughtful, informed evaluation. The film's commercial success, the Hollywood prizes it has won, the advertising which is popularising it around the world, cry out for sharp-witted discussion. One of the ads I saw—a full page in a New York daily newspaper—praised the film as "rehabilitating the idealism which the world needs", and "restoring the image of the moral revolution. . . ." God help us if the millions believe word for word, image for image, what they see in the movies.

What I still think needs stressing is that the cinema is too important a medium to be left to the movie critics, for the most part a talented lot of journalists, but usually without a political idea in their heads. The same goes for the TV medium, as television critics (who may know something about theatrical entertainment values) are assigned to cover full-length documentaries about civil wars and political trials and international diplomatic crises with just about as much know-how as a vegetarian in a butcher-shop, or, if you will, a cannibal in a greenhouse.

The other day I read a piece in the usually excellent *Financial Times* of London about a full-length BBC-TV interview which Malcolm Muggeridge conducted with Stalin's daughter, Svetlana, reconsidering her life as a child in the Kremlin during the darkest days of her father's brutal Bolshevik excesses. The author was one Chris Dunkley, a readable TV critic, very knowledgeable about such matters as cable channels and video cassettes and commercial broadcasting. But what was he to do, without the faintest notion of history and politics, with Svetlana, a child of the October Revolution if there ever was one? He tries to evaluate, but finds himself insulted by the sharpness of Svetlana's critique. Attacking her "contempt" for Soviet policy, Dunkley notes

> ". . . for all the world as though the lot of the average peasant in Tsarist Russia had not been improved under communism."
>
> *Financial Times*, 10 March 1982, p. 13.

Obviously the whole literature of the fate of the peasantry under Lenin and Stalin has passed this poor chap by—the millions of deaths in the forced Collectivisation, the years of Russia's hunger, even the needless hardships of bad harvests today due to allegedly "poor weather." There are, after all, only a couple of dozen good historical books on the subject which could have been consulted. In addition, even if there were an "improvement", how does it compare to the contemporary improvement in the lot of the peasants and farmers of, say, Western Germany under Dr Adenauer, or in Britain from Churchill to Mrs Thatcher, or in "bourgeois" Austria since communism retreated in 1955 and left the Austrians to get on with their crops and food production in a sensible way? What about the improvements among the farm population of capitalistic America from

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World War I to the present day when it serves as a bread-basket to, among others, the workers and peasants of the Communist USSR?

NO, TELEVISION, TOO, is far too important to be left to the TV reviewers. As Chris Dunkley writes, it is intolerable to listen to such eye-witnesses, going on about the Soviet tragedy,

> "... pouring scorn on a political system which actually seeks to put into practice the principle enunciated by Jesus of sharing your goods with the poor—this was hypocrisy of such an order to be sickening."

When the TV critic of the leading organ of British finance capitalism begins to preach theological doctrine, then it is "time, gentlemen", time indeed to throw up one's hands in despair.

Therefore, as I say, one does need the Ferdinand Mounts and Richard Greniers to bring to the subject of revolutionary politics a certain sophistication and empirical knowledge. What a difference between your local movie reviewer and the special article I have just seen on the subject in the *Toronto Sun*—by Lewis Feuer, philosopher and political historian, who just happens to know a little something about the material.

He emphasises the character analysis of Walter Lippmann, a youthful friend of John Reed, who suspected that "all social revolutionists are psychological frauds." Reed was an adolescent "cheer-leader." He cheered for football stars at Harvard. He went on to stage a pageant for strikers in Madison Square Garden. He rooted for Pancho Villa, despite all the guerrilla massacres, in his book *Insurgent Mexico*, enjoying (in his words) "dancing and carousing in looted haciendas all night...." Finally, in the great pro-Bolshevik moment of his brief enthused life, he succeeded (to use the description of Louise Bryant herself) in "introducing American advertising psychology" into Soviet propaganda.

Professor Feuer underlines the fact that the October 1917 *putsch* destroyed the most hopeful development of Russian history, the February 1917 Revolution. Here Louise Bryant (a poor caricature of herself in the Warren Beatty film which cast *radical-chic* Diane Keaton in the role[1]) is a far cooler witness than John Reed. She had no hero-worship for Lenin whom she found "cold, unattractive, impatient...." She had "a tremendous respect" for the liberal-moderate Kerensky. She admired the Menshevik, Tsereteli, "a great man, towering over the others as Abraham Lincoln did over contemporaries", but shortly thereafter driven into exile.

STILL AND ALL, even romantic enthusiastic uncritical John Reed began to have doubts, as the Bolshevik *putsch* which had been masquerading as the true revolutionary fulfilment of the people's ideals began to lash out at the people's representatives—the wholesale executions ordered by Lenin, Dzerzhinski (the head of the Chekist secret police), and Trotsky in crushing the Kronstadt sailors' rebellion of 1920.

In the film the darker, sceptical notes are only hinted at in passing, for evidently Box-Office calls for images of martyred idealism and not incipient disillusionment. Reed is shown objecting to Bolshevik agit-prop techniques which change a slogan of his about "class war" into "holy war" in order to win over the Moslem comrades. But in the single political argument in over almost four hours in the life of a revolutionary ideologue, Reed defends the Bolsheviks against the anarchist bitterness of Emma Goldman.

> EMMA GOLDMAN (*Moscow, 1920*): "The dream we had is dying, Jack. The centralized state has all the power. They're putting anarchists like me in jail, exterminating all dissenters. I want no part of it. Nothing works. There's starvation. Four million Russians have died.... It's a system that will never work!"
>
> REED: "Those four million died because of the Allied blockade! What did you think anyway? It was all going to work right away? It's a war, Emma! And we have to fight it with discipline, terror, firing squads—or give up.... Otherwise, what has our whole life meant?"

However, towards the very end—and I remember once hearing this from Max Eastman, Reed's best friend of the time—John Reed could no longer go on playing the role which Upton Sinclair once called "the Playboy of the Revolution." Reed's "ten days that shook the world" were "the tremors and fevers of an ideological illness." Words were stirring, ideas seductive; but he could only bear so much of the reality. In one memorable film scene Reed races after a Red Cavalry chariot but never quite catches up and fails to clamber aboard; in another, he comes back from a Comintern meeting in Baku and gets off the train

[1] In his sharp critique of the American film biography of Reed, Dr Günter Zehm (*Die Welt*, 23 April) calls attention to the forthcoming Russian version in which the Louise Bryant love-interest is replaced by an affair with Mabel Dodge Luhan, mistresses being after all as replaceable as commissars. Evidently the famed Soviet director Sergei Bonarchuk (who made the 7-hour *War and Peace*), is being given enough ideological leeway to hire Ursula Andress for the romantic role and so to provide some Western-style sex interest, at least for export. Thus, in a true spirit of cultural *détente*, Hollywood at long last is serving to make spicy trailers to prepare the way for Moscow spectaculars.

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(the "locomotive of history"?), dishevelled, broken, alone.

Still, the last words which the film leaves us with are:

> "Grand things are ahead. Worth living, and worth dying for. Jack himself said that."

Inasmuch as Jack died in October 1920, some six decades of history are thus, in a quick, final fade-out, relegated to the memory-hole. Grenier tells a touching Manhattan anecdote as he left after one of *Reds*' early screenings, together with a well-known American film-critic, "his face illuminated", for he had loved every minute of it.

> "'What was so great about the film', he said emotionally, 'was that it shows that all John Reed's wonderful idealism was *still* a good thing, no matter what happened after . . . . What went wrong over there in Russia anyway?'"

REVOLUTIONS are too important to be left to the revolutionaries. They never remember enough; they forget too much. They pass on a glow, but never a real illumination.

> "There is a constant percentage [Lewis Feuer writes] among successive generations of students who have a hankering for revolutionary experience, and would like to storm the citadels of the *status quo*. Sometimes they can find a cause at hand around which to project their emotions. At other times a plausible cause is hard to find . . . ."

But will that stop them? Not at all. They will find the spirit of Jesus in the guerrilla violence of El Salvador. They will see a "new dawn" among the *Sandinistas* of Nicaragua. They will locate "George Washington" among Ho Chi Minh's liberation army in Viet Nam. They will, one fine day, perhaps be sadly disappointed, like Miss Susan Sontag, in General Jaruzelski's martial law, after presumably being so hopeful about the humanising renaissance of Polish society under Comrades Bierut or Gomulka or Gierek.

Lewis Feuer's conclusion is worth quoting (and worth sending on to the local reviewers mindlessly staring into their "window" on a world they never made):

> "*Reds* finally fails because it never illumines the demonry underlying John Reed's obsession with revolution. Nor does it unravel those components that have made him a symbol for so many intellectuals—that mixture of the will to revolt, self-destructiveness, adventurousness, longing for ideological creed, contempt toward established institutions, faith in a transcending social leap, the desire to identify with wielders of power claiming to be the locomotive engineers of history."

If Mao was Cromwell, then Castro was Tom Paine, and Mugabe Mazzini. Central casting is full of ingenious little tricks of impersonation. In the end we always wind up in Madame Tussaud's, crowded with waxworks all soon to be melted down.

End of the Line

IT WAS the kind of remark born of physical exhaustion and intellectual despair—3 hours and 30 minutes of the aforementioned *Reds* and, a day later, some 3 hours and 40 minutes on the BBC-TV screen, devoted to the case of Alger Hiss (with the protagonist himself doing his best to encourage the apologia). "I suppose", said my companion, "that if John Reed hadn't died so young of typhus in Russia, he would have become Alger Hiss. . . ."

Were the two men at all similar, enough to compare the two cases of attractive young Americans gone ideologically wrong? Both were, of course, tall and handsome WASPS, deeply and unswervingly devoted to what they conceived as mankind's good and the true march of progress. But one was overt, and the other covert. Reed was an open and very public defender of the Soviet cause, became an elected Party official of the Communist International, and was posthumously honoured by the Bolsheviks by being buried in the Kremlin wall.[1] Hiss was secretive, duplicitous, artfully stealing official documents for transmission

[1] There would appear to be some very blurred astigmatic pride in the way many US literary historians record the fact that he is "the only American" to be buried in the Kremlin alongside Lenin, Stalin, and other Bolshevik worthies. John Reed's funeral was, to be sure, a long time ago; but, at this late date, something more like shame should be involved in being associated, even posthumously, with the régime that gave us the Gulag Archipelago.

One New York film critic (Rex Reed in the *Daily News*) acidly remarked: "Beatty obviously has an obsession with this man—the only American to be buried in the Kremlin, as though the fact was some kind of honor instead of a disgrace. . . ."

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to Moscow, and never in almost fifty years tipping his hand. He neither confessed to his misdemeanours or his "selfless service" (as so many conscience-stricken spies and secret agents in our time have done) nor made any effort to rationalise a personal commitment which led to choosing loyalty to a foreign power rather than to one's own; never openly explaining one's sympathies for the workers' paradise (as, say, Burgess, Maclean, Philby and Blunt were later to do). Perhaps it was the difference between outer- and inner-oriented personalities. Possibly it was the difference in the revolutionary *Zeitgeist*, the break between the early "October" romanticism of Lenin's and Trotsky's "days that shook the world" and the surgically clinical consolidation of totalitarian power under Joseph Stalin, busy purging all the old comrades. The one worked by day, the other by night. No, John Reed could not have become Alger Hiss, even if in the ideological loyalties and commitments of our day it is only a small step from the overground into the underground.

What is bemusing and seductive about the comparison is that the crowd of millions who adore Reed for his heroic sacrifice in a foreign struggle overlaps to a great extent with the mass of Hiss supporters who continue to rally to his protestations of innocence. One is Byron, the other is Captain Dreyfus; and both stir the deepest echoes in the progressive soul. When the honour of modern gods and heroes is at stake, what matter the humdrum truths of what really happened in 1917 or 1937? Casuistry—and self-deception—is the order of the day.

STILL, I WAS rather surprised to find the BBC allowing Alger Hiss, over in London to make publicity for the "documentary film", to get away with so much that is obviously not so. For example, this is what the BBC's *Radio Times* reported (10-16 April, interview with Robert Ottaway, p. 3):

> "The film he is here to introduce was first shown [i.e. privately] two years ago in the States—'but it has never been shown on TV over there. The networks depend on state support—and with Reagan in charge. . . .' Hiss gave a sigh."

Now I do not have any intimate knowledge of why the three major US TV-networks did not leap at the chance of exhibiting what must be the greatest American exercise in whitewash since Tom Sawyer went about whitewashing Aunt Polly's fence. But the notion that President Reagan could in any way censor or stop it is sheer fantasy. The networks do not "depend on state support" (except conceivably in the sense that their channels are all officially registered and technically "regulated"). And a sigh from Alger Hiss cannot drown out the drone of constant criticism—of Reagan, of Nixon, of Lyndon Johnson—which has been regularly broadcast. As I write, the Washington correspondent of the *New York Times* reports:

> "The Reagan administration, angered at what its officials called a 'misleading' portrayal of its economic policies on a CBS News Television documentary, has asked the network Thursday for a half-hour in prime viewing hours 'to present our side of the story.' CBS turned down the request."
>
> *Herald Tribune*, 24 April

The dispatch in the *Daily Telegraph* was headlined: WHITE HOUSE 'GAGGED' BY TV NETWORK. This is realistically closer to the true state of affairs, and the BBC should have known better than to air Hiss's blatantly self-serving explanations. The US networks, as was amply demonstrated in the recent spate of devastating American documentaries against Haig's foreign policy and Weinberger's rearmament programme, are quite prepared to be one-sided, prejudiced, and tendentious. Obviously the Hiss film, even if acceptable to the BBC editors, went far beyond the tolerable standards of partisanship. It could even be that someone up there at ABC, NBC, and CBS took the trouble to read Allen Weinstein's standard work on the subject, *Perjury: The Hiss-Chambers Case* (1978), with all of its massive documentation of the true story.

WHICH IS MORE than one can say about even some of the most prestigious Fleet Street journalists. In *The Observer* Michael Davie did, as he always does, a charming interview; but none of the conversation with Hiss betrayed any familiarity with anything beyond that old silly book by Alistair Cooke in 1950 which tried to argue speciously that it was *A Generation on Trial*. (It wasn't; by rough count there were perhaps a few dozen Americans in a generation of some five million citizens who spied for Joseph Dzhugashvili Stalin.) And when Davie asked about that "chilling moment" when Whittaker Chambers testified how Alger Hiss once spotted a prothonotary warbler (how could he have known something so recondite if they were total strangers?), the *Observer* story balked at its own ideal of ruthless questioning and investigative reporting and only opined that the chap was still an amateur ornithologist, and was still bird-watching at Durrants Hotel behind Oxford Street:

> ". . . There's a blackbird that sings on the roof right across from my hotel room."

The real and embarrassing point is evaded; for if Chambers did not know this detail from his close relationship with Hiss, then surely sometime in the last 30 years Hiss's lawyers would have been able

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to demonstrate that the sly, sneaky fellow must have "reconstructed" the telling incident about the prothonotary warbler by running around among Hiss's friends and picking up a stray fact here and there. . . . No such luck.

Peter Paterson, a much-respected by-line in the investigative *Guardian*, also seems to have stopped serious reading about the case at Alistair Cooke's book. Not Hiss, he feels, but the New Deal, was on trial; and he evidently would throw all the massive documentation out of court, especially since most of it he would pronounce spurious. On the matter of the "Pumpkin Papers", the materials which Chambers produced to prove his charge that Hiss had indeed given him secret government documents to transmit to Moscow, Paterson writes (*The Spectator*, 10 April, p. 14):

> "Hiss himself has never been able to type, and why he should have gone to the trouble of having someone else type them out when he could have photographed them all instead has never been explained."

Never? The matter has been exhaustively gone into by Professor Allen Weinstein in his book. And when, a few years ago, the same argument was rehashed once again by Eric Jacobs, then an editor of the *Sunday Times*, Sidney Hook replied in ENCOUNTER (March 1979):

> ". . . Mr Jacobs refers to his 'humdrum obsession' that Hiss could not have been guilty of espionage because if he was 'why should [Hiss] have chosen the clumsy and time-consuming espionage technique of taking documents home and retyping them at night. There must have been easier ways even in the 1930s. . . .' Mr Jacobs can cure himself of his obsession by reading Professor Weinstein's book, or rereading it with greater care and less incredulity. The original classified documents that Hiss took home with him had to be returned the next morning. Otherwise their absence would have been discovered. Chambers picked them up, had them photographed, and returned them to Hiss the same night. On the nights Chambers could not call, Hiss made typewritten copies of the documents he was able to purloin that day, returned the originals the next morning, and turned over the accumulated typed copies to Chambers when he appeared. The typed copies were photographed by Felix Inslerman—an agent who confirmed Chambers' testimony—and returned to Chambers who destroyed them. Hiss also made handwritten summaries of classified documents that were only briefly in his possession and gave them to Chambers. All perfectly simple—very efficient—and no one the wiser. . . . [Other] confessed espionage agents also used the same techniques. Had Chambers not preserved the materials as 'a life preserver', when he was getting ready to break, all this would have been dismissed as 'hearsay'. . . ."

This may not convince certain minds who have what William James might have called the invincible will to disbelieve; but not to know or acknowledge this account as an "explanation" is surely what Samuel Johnson referred to, modestly, as "sheer ignorance."

ARE WE being too earnest? Peter Paterson is perhaps being more playful. He senses literary fantasy in Chambers' testimony, and on the subject of the head of Soviet espionage in the USA of those years, a Colonel Bykov, he refers only to Chambers' "own heavily annotated copy of Dostoevsky's novel *The Possessed* in Russian. . . . An important part of the action in the novel takes place in Moscow at a house in Bykov Street."

But important parts of the action in all Russian novels also take place in Moscow houses with rooms that have rugs in them; and it was Colonel Bykov's connection with the rugs which Whittaker Chambers gave as "presents" to "loyal comrades" that constituted a devastating piece of evidence against Hiss. Maybe it was Dostoevsky's rug which was found in Alger Hiss's house in Washington? If Peter Paterson had read Weinstein's book, he would have known that the incident had less to do with Dostoevsky in Moscow than with Touloukian in Manhattan. This was the celebrated Bokhara rug dealer in New York from whom Professor Meyer Schapiro—along with Lionel Trilling, a Columbia University schoolmate of Whittaker Chambers—bought the rugs in question. Professor Schapiro kept the sales receipt; and Alger and Priscilla Hiss did have one of the Bokhara rugs in their Washington apartment. Poor Bykov! there's no gratitude for the generous, and the Fleet Street sceptic doesn't even believe that was his real name (Paterson: "the existence of this individual could never be corroborated"). How would he want to double-check this—in some readily available secret handbook of senior intelligence officers in the Kremlin, or *Who's Who in the G.P.U.*? . . . For those on the "faith ladder"[2]—not unlike Walter

[2] The "seven rungs" of William James' "faith ladder" included:

> "There is nothing absurd in a certain view of the world being true, nothing self-contradictory; it might have been true under certain conditions; it may be true, even now; it is fit to be true; it ought to be true; it must be true; it shall be true, at any rate for me. . . ."

So it is that, in the end, Peter Paterson concludes: ". . . 'an innocent man, wrongly convicted, hangs around to the bitter end.' Alger Hiss has hung around, and the end may at last be in sight."

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Duranty of the *New York Times* who accepted the truth of Stalin's notorious "show trials" because they coincided with his view of the dark Karamazov corners of the "Russian soul"—the appeal to Dostoevsky seems always to be a kind of solution.

BEAR WITH ME, dear reader, for a few other marginal remarks. For I would be the last who would want to deny that the great and challenging cases of crime, guilt and innocence are complicated, puzzling, and defy easy, simple, utterly coherent solutions. What is there, then, about certain historic espionage cases that catches special public passions and makes polemical argumentation interminable? Is it only the melodramatic mystery of the trail of clues and circumstances? Can it be nowadays also the deeper current of social and ideological attitudes?

For my own part I am quite willing to follow the Dallas evidence in the Lee Oswald case to wherever it truly leads. If he was a "loner", so be it; and if there should turn out to be real hard evidence, wickedly suppressed by the Warren Commission, that J. Edgar Hoover, or Lyndon Johnson, or Khrushchev's *KGB*, or Castro's revanchists arranged for the assassination of President Kennedy (there are sensational books devoted to all these hypotheses and conjectures), well, I guess we just have to know: and there is no way of getting around "the way things truly happened." One tries to keep a relatively open mind on whether Napoleon was really murdered on St Helena (although the recent studies which try to involve the British commandant seem more than a little speculative). Who in point of historic fact did away with the "Little Princes" in the Tower? And what was the true nature of the mystery of the Man in the Iron Mask? I am still, at the moment, torn between the well-documented theses that behind Van der Lubbe's burning of the *Reichstag* in 1933 was a Nazi or a Communist conspiracy....

For some 30 years now the question of Alger Hiss's guilt—not unlike the older question of Captain Alfred Dreyfus's innocence—has agitated liberal lawyers, Left-wing writers, conservative sceptics, so much so that at times to take a position (the unpopular one: believing in Hiss's guilt, i.e. his perjury, hence his espionage) was to have a lonely battle against the odds. Why did so many, especially among the liberal intelligentsia and in academic (and indeed in capitalistic) circles, decline to believe what stared them in the face? Spies and traitors are, after all, almost routine affairs in contemporary history. The Queen's adviser on Renaissance paintings turns out to be an agent, possibly a double-agent. Senior British Foreign Office diplomats reported to the other side of the Iron Curtain. One of Willy Brandt's trusted *SPD* assistants spent a good deal of his time quietly rerouting top-secret NATO documents eastwards. A stolid Swiss General is sentenced for purloining maps of Alpine redoubts and handing them over to certain unauthorised Helvetian tourists. One sniffs ideological embarrassment all along the line. Is it merely the stubborn emotional refusal to admit that such excrescences—espionage and treason, degenerating nowadays into kidnapping and terrorism—could possibly have their roots in the "idealistic Left"?

Be that as it may, with the publication of Weinstein's massive and definitive book—and the failure of the desperate attempt by Victor Navasky as well as the indefatigable Hiss to discredit it—the case as far as hard facts are concerned has been considered all but finally closed. Alger Hiss, when challenged under oath as a high State Department official to reply to charges of having transmitted documents and secret cables to a Soviet espionage ring, had indeed perjured himself. Whittaker Chambers, in naming names and producing the "Pumpkin Papers", written in Hiss's own hand and typed (by his wife) on his own typewriter, had been telling the substantial truth.

We may yet, as I suggest, have still another tiresome round with desperate doubters. "*Still ambiguous*" is the refrain of some recalcitrant commentators, still searching for fine Machiavellian plots. And some time ago Hiss's British publisher, Mr John Calder, came up with the original rationalisation that if Hiss had been a Russian spy why would he not be "living in comfort for the rest of his days in the Soviet Union?" No doubt about it, Anglo-American opinion has been strangely confused and disturbed. In the beginning British attitudes may have been misled by the erratic books on the case by Alistair Cooke and Lord Jowett. But since then the lessons of a whole series of espionage revelations—Klaus Fuchs, Pontecorvo, the Krogers, Burgess-Philby-Maclean and Blunt (and possibly even, if we are to believe Chapman Pincher's *Treachery Was Their Trade*, Sir Roger Hollis, the one-time head of MI-6!)—all have left a more hard-headed awareness of the nature of contemporary ideological disloyalty.

AMONG THE Americans the issues were discoloured by a sense of dark sinister plotting, possibly because there actually were a number of little Machiavellis scurrying around the Washington scene. The US liberal-Left could never bring itself to believe that anything a Richard Nixon, or a J. Edgar Hoover, or a Joe McCarthy had a hand in could be what it seemed to be. Chambers, accordingly, was widely taken to be an evil and twisted figure of monstrous proportions. The US psychiatrists disgraced themselves with their court-room testimony about "mental instability",

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"sex perversions" and "psychotic fantasies", now reinforced by the professional liberal moralists who take time off from their valiant struggle for "gay liberation" to denounce Chambers' homosexuality. At best Chambers emerged as a seedy unreliable character out of a Raymond Chandler novel, peddling fakes and forgeries.

Hiss, on the other hand, was a sterling model of an Horatio Alger success story: tall, handsome, well-educated, a brilliant law student, a favourite of distinguished Supreme Court Justices (Holmes, Frankfurter), a respected public servant. How could such a man ever turn out to be "the worst traitor since Benedict Arnold"? Bankers, judges, diplomats, educators rallied to his support (and still do: he was recently readmitted to the Massachusetts Bar to practise law, and is regularly invited to lecture at major universities). Mrs Roosevelt, defending (as she thought) the honour of the New Deal, once said that "one had only to look at the two men to know who was telling the truth. . . ." A famous philosopher admitted that he never under any circumstances would accept the fact of Hiss's guilt—even if Hiss were to confess it.

In a way it was, I suspect, America's last love affair with a WASP hero (and the John Reed boom shares in the nostalgia). For after that came the new Washington era of rootless Californians, Midwest Germans, lace-curtain Irish, Texas cowboys, Bible-belt farmers and associated ethnics, even a Hollywood studio star.

It was a naive, expensive and embittered love affair: they had picked the wrong fellow. Beneath Hiss's patrician exterior was a new type of ideological man, a compartmentalised personality; when Klaus Fuchs tried to explain it for himself he called it "controlled schizophrenia." Perhaps the best clue to this improbable political life-style is the insight of a New York publisher and historian to whom Alger Hiss had applied for a job-interview after his term in Lewisburg jail: "An hour later I was bewildered. Mask succeeded mask, role role, personality personality. . . ."

Hiss, it should be remembered, was not tried for espionage; a judge and a jury, even in the so-called "cold war hysteria" of the day, might have found some legalistic grounds for "reasonable doubt" or reason to invoke the statute of limitations. But he was charged with perjury, and the demonstration of his lies, equivocations and contradictions, all under oath, fill some hundreds of pages of Allen Weinstein's book. At times he was fabricating so quickly and ingeniously that he could not quite keep the various cover-up pieces of fiction together. If the trial prosecutor was persistent, the historical record is even more merciless. In perjuring himself Hiss contributed to the confirmation of Chambers' account of the extensive Soviet espionage system which most of Washington officialdom had been pooh-poohing for a decade and longer. Since his break with the secret Communist underground, for which he was the leading US courier, Chambers tried in vain to get his story told; but from the President down there was hardly a soul who would believe him.

AS FOR HISS, he still sticks to his discredited story, and the long film which the BBC presented showed him holding fast to that worn-out little patchwork of lame excuses and sheer fabrication with which for 30-odd years now he has (not unlike his young pre-Watergate Congressional interlocutor, Richard Nixon) tried to "brazen it out" in the face of a thousand stubborn facts. He lied about only slightly knowing a "George Crosley" (a name he made up); about the Woodstock typewriter on which his wife typed the secret documents for transmission to Moscow (a fortune was spent on building a new "identical" Woodstock in order to argue a frame-up, but it didn't work); about the Ford car which in a burst of romantic irresponsibility he wanted to donate to the Party (alas, the "sales slips" were found and led to two well-known Communist organisers); about the Bokhara rug given to him (via Chambers) by *GPU*-Colonel Bykov "in gratitude to American comrades." All of this, and more, was well-established after the two trials of 1948 and 1950 and Hiss's sentencing to five years' imprisonment (of which he served 44 months). I can only recommend again the exhaustive study of the whole case by Weinstein, for what he has done—starting out as he did as a sceptic with strong suspicions that an innocent Hiss was framed and a neurotic Chambers had compulsively lied—was to follow every trail, double-check every clue, relentlessly exposing the logic of the evidence. I find it, even on second reading, an exercise in criminological detection of such brilliance and thoroughness it would make Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot envious. Indeed truth is not only stranger than fiction but also truer; and I have gone on at such length about the case for I have found in it more political surprise, human complexity and dramatic tension than, say, in any of the last espionage novels by Graham Greene, Len Deighton and John le Carré.

A LAST THOUGHT. What of the story from "the other side of the hill" which, as Liddell Hart used to say, is often the decisive part of the altercation?

The Kremlin archives remain closed—although we may be confident, noting the kind of research which went into Khrushchev's secret speech, that every relevant document has been preserved in some file. It reminds one of the final pages of

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Victor Serge's memorable account of *The Case of Comrade Tulayev*; when the tragedy is all over and done with, a pettifogging little archivist collects all the documents, seals them in a box, and stacks them properly away. The truth-seeking historian can always hope. But, for now, no senior Communist, active or retired, has volunteered or been persuaded to speak.

When Weinstein searched for Joszef Peter, the brilliant organiser of the whole Communist espionage apparatus in which Chambers and Hiss operated, he found him alive and well in Budapest, talkative at 80, but sternly unrevealing. When the trail of Colonel Bykov led him to Jerusalem where Bykov's predecessor as the "New York control" had withdrawn (after having broken with Moscow), he found only his widow.[3]

Still, there is a file somewhere, and there are men who know about it. When Igor Gouzenko (the code clerk who defected in Ottawa in 1945) was asked about US operative agents he mentioned "an assistant to Secretary of State Stettinius." A Czech archivist has disclosed that when Noel Field had been interrogated in Prague there was mention of Hiss as a fellow-member of the Soviet underground in Washington. When two high pre-War defectors, General Krivitsky and General Barmine (and I have this from Barmine), met in Paris and warily checked each other's *GPU* credentials, the name of Hiss as an agent of Soviet military intelligence appeared to link them.

Muscovites were also the source of two other surprising indiscretions. During the time of the establishment of the UN, nobody less than Gromyko (according to Stettinius's diaries, only recently published) said that he would be "very happy to see Alger Hiss appointed temporary secretary-general as he had a very high regard for Alger Hiss, particularly for his fairness and his impartiality. . . ." Even more astonishing was 30 years later the Moscow-cleared passage in Kim Philby's memoirs, *My Silent War* (1968), in which he refers to the "evil" US era of spy-hunting: "the era of Hiss, Coplon, Fuchs, Gold, Greenglass, and the brave Rosenbergs—not to mention others who are still nameless. . . ." Each of these items can be explained away as "hearsay" evidence, but taken together their suggestiveness for the historian is irresistible.

If light is ever to come out of the East, patience must be the historian's stalwart virtue. Still, time in all great tug-of-war controversies is held to be working, slowly and surely, for the one side or the other. The biographer Merle Miller tells the story that when he last met Alger Hiss in New York, some seven years ago, Hiss went on and on about the "faked" Woodstock typewriter which was used to "forge" copies of the incriminating documents.

> ". . . at his favorite Greenwich Village restaurant, Alger told me that he knew who had built the phony Woodstock and where the man lived. He said he was going to announce his findings to the press in a week or so."
>
> *Washington Post*, 16 April 1978

Nothing has been heard about this yet, but as we know from the cheerful BBC interview with him he is elated by the spectacle of his faithful followers remaining confidently ensconced high up on the rungs of the "faith ladder."

M.J.L.

[3] See in ENCOUNTER (June 1977), Allen Weinstein, "Nadya—A Spy Story."

Hill Farmer

". . . if they wing low", he said, gaze
on the swallows, "there's rain on it . . ."; and now,
this road, rain on it from sea-road
in a gusty buffet under

sky brown over silverpoint bog:
sea- . . . no, ocean-edge weather from here
to Greenland, true billows, snowflaked
with spume and the fulmars; but from this

roadhead you cannot see valley-head, lonely
house and only man asleep
in chair and dog Prince with one
fixed eye on fire-eye, muzzle across a paw.

John Holloway

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LETTERS

Yalta & After

How very appropriate that you publish two letters (Encounter, March) about Yalta at the same time as we witness the dedication of a memorial to its victims.

Charles Janson mentions the 14,000 Poles murdered at Katyn. (In fact only 4,254 corpses were found in that forest; it is likely that another 3,841 lie just north of Kharkov while a further 6,376 may be at or near Bologoye.) He goes on to suggest that President Roosevelt did not know the identity of the perpetrators: it is more likely that he refused to believe evidence to which he must have had access. Lord Gladwyn appears to concur by his opinion that Roosevelt was completely taken in by "Uncle Joe"; my only disagreement with this correspondent is with his mooted point that perhaps it was right to repatriate ex-Soviet General Vlasov's Army. True, it supported the Third Reich; but whether Cossacks or Ukrainians, they fought in German uniform, and could thus have been considered as prisoners-of-war. But, overall, Lord Gladwyn upholds the United Nations principle of *non-refoulement*, and condemns the handing over of Soviet citizens without their consent.

Underlying the controversy over both Katyn and Yalta are three major concepts: Justice, Freedom, and Honour—all of which were seriously damaged by the West in each case. The Katyn and Yalta memorials go some way to dissolve our share in the dishonour, albeit that justice and freedom were total casualties. Sadly, honour seems now to be a fading human value, a current example of which is our reluctance to help Somalia, where we still have a large debt to pay.

Katyn and Yalta will always remain dreadful chapters in history; Somalia is for today and tomorrow. Lord Gladwyn's fight to save the BBC external broadcasts was successful in the Somali case, but there is more to be done if the fate of these people—whom we betrayed in 1897—is not to be sealed as a result of the recent Libya-Ethiopia-South Yemen alliance. Evidence of that triad's activities is the use of nerve gas against the Eritreans, and Ethiopia's dabbling in South Sudan. It may already be too late to save the Eritreans, but the attack against Somalia has not yet been fully launched. In this area there is yet time for us to help or, at least, pledge ourselves ready so to do.

Louis FitzGibbon

Langstone
Havant

Miss Redgrave Regrets . . .

May I correct a small error? Miss Vanessa Redgrave, who carries her theatrical talents over into the field of revolutionary zealotry, can be accused of many things—but not, as in Encounter (April, p.27), of being a supporter of the so-called Militant Tendency. For this she would have to be a member of the Labour Party, which she is not, preferring the pure course of political action, as prescribed by Leninist-Trotskyist doctrine. The reformist Labour Party, even though increasingly influenced by the Marxist "Militant Tendency", is surely contemptible as compared to her splendidly orthodox Socialist Workers' Party. This, in Miss Redgrave's eyes, is the true starring vehicle for the revolutionary drama, and she has supported it, campaigned for it (when her passions for the PLO give her time), and has even run for political office in London on its ticket. She lost, by an embarrassingly wide margin; but come the revolution, comrades, all the offices will be ours. Until, perhaps, as in the fate of their leader Leon Trotsky, some "terrible Georgian" comes to purge them.

Mack Bohan

Liverpool

The Syphilitic Shock

Stanislav Andreski's article, "The Syphilitic Shock" (May), prompts me to ask about him Elizabeth Bennet's question about Mr Collins: "Can he be a sensible man?"

The opening section is convincing and plausible enough; it is the body of his argument that amazes. I was startled to read in a contemporary journal the unsubstantiated statement that "Orthodox bishops . . . normally underwent voluntary castration before promotion" to save themselves from temptations against chastity. The authoritative witness of the councils of the Eastern Church, from Nicaea to Trullo, proves that this statement is not and could not be true. The long quotations from H. C. Lea's book on clerical celibacy, so redolent of the prejudices of the liberal Protestantism of the 1860s (when it was first published), give away the cause and show the effects of Mr Andreski's errors. No scholar aware of the obligations to his readers that publication in your journal entails would refer without apology or qualification to that discredited and antique work. How many times must the inadequacies of Lea's books be demonstrated before journalists learn to approach them with caution?

Mr Andreski's fundamental thesis—that sexual restraint is perverse and leads to perversity—is worthy of Lea, his time, and his culture. But today we rightly reject such elementary and condescending psychology which does not deserve the influential platform your publishing it bestows.

Daniel Callam
Editor
The Canadian Catholic Review

Saskatoon
Saskatchewan
Canada

The Two Needhams

I was intrigued by your curious lack of comment on the high placement of Dr Joseph Needham, FRS, in the current stakes for Britain's leading intellectuals [October, p.93]. Dr Needham's volumes on *History and Civilization in China* do indeed constitute "some of the most important historical work of our time" (to quote my own *The Idea of an Historical Education*).

Yet in an issue of Encounter which featured Paul Hollander's "Pilgrims on the Run", should we not have been reminded that Dr Needham was for some twenty years one of the most gullible dupes of the Soviet Union and that he transferred his uncritical allegiance to the China of Chairman Mao at the very time that at least

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minimal improvements in life and liberty were taking place in the USSR?

Needham has been a crude moral futurist in all his political and philosophical utterances. In his 1946 series of essays published by Allen & Unwin under the title of *History Is on Our Side* he consistently argued the doctrines that ends justify any means and that future might is future and, indeed, present right. In the most evil years of Stalinism he wrote:

> "not only Human History but all Natural History sanctions the highest hopes of those who look for the coming order of social justice and comradeship—the 'Magnetic Mountain' of Day Lewis, the 'Distant Point' of Afinogenov. The good society arises out of the evolutionary process. . . ."

In praising, as we should, Needham's contributions to scholarship, let us not forget his moral and political blindness over half-a-century. The memory of those who were foully murdered both in the USSR and in China in the name of "social justice and comradeship" is spat upon if we fail to censure those who, however eminent in other ways, helped to create the atmosphere in which such atrocities were at once committed and denied.

G. G. PARTINGTON
Senior Lecturer in Education
Flinders University
South Australia

Roosevelt's Brother

TO DISPEL the concern of A. Lammers [ENCOUNTER, February] regarding a putative FDR full brother, may I say that Averell Harriman's reference in the interview with George Urban [November 1981], evidently telescoped when the interview was transcribed, was to Hall Roosevelt, the brother of *Eleanor* Roosevelt and a contemporary of Governor Harriman at Groton School.

ARTHUR SCHLESINGER, Jr
City University
New York

Draper's Thompson

THEODORE DRAPER in his "Dilemma of the West" (ENCOUNTER, February) ridicules E. P. Thompson, the recognised guru of the recent revival of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, for resting "his hopes on a different kind of force", a Third Force of "peaceful European opinion acting as a Third Negotiator, between both superpowers, with the ultimate objective of reunifying European societies and culture."

I must protest at the gratuitous attribution of such silliness to my sometime school friend Edward Thompson. (He and I joined the same independent boarding school from preparatory schools in, respectively, Oxford and Cambridge in the same term of 1936–37.) For what has Edward Thompson ever said or done, either as an open member of the Communist Party from 1941–42 until 1956 or as a self-confessed Marxist since that very unthorough "Hungarian" (1956) conversion, to suggest that he does not recognise (and would not, in the main, relish) the obvious consequences of unilateral disarmament in the face of Soviet imperialism? Certainly there are among the members and supporters of CND many whinnying ninnies who fully deserve the reproaches of Theodore Draper. But the Edward Thompson whom I knew was always capable of seeing a long way in front of his nose, and I do not believe that he has become Draper's or any other sort of fool.

ANTONY FLEW
University of Reading

Plugs, Unplugged

DURING the last six decades the Soviet Union has been accused of many and various faults, but the most consistent and unvarying accusation has been "Lack of Bath Plugs" (your Columnist "*M*" in the May ENCOUNTER).

This may be heresy, but I believe the Soviet Union does not have bath plugs because it does not want bath plugs—at least not in wash-basins. When I confronted a Russian friend in Leningrad with this perennial accusation she explained to me that the Russians prefer to wash under running water—the hot and cold water are mixed to the desired temperature in one tap and you let it run as you wash. She declared that filling the basin and washing different parts of the body in the same water was unhygienic.

If you take a bath in a hotel a plug is provided. I have no first-hand knowledge of the traditional Russian *Banya* but suspect it to be as different from the normal English bath with plug as a samovar from a kettle.

BERYL GRAVES
Ca N'Alluny
Deia
Mallorca

The "Social" Party

As an *ex-member* of the SDP—driven out by wrong attitudes and answers from Mrs Shirley Williams, whose "social" affinities seem to run far more strongly towards Roman Catholicism than to a true social ecumenism which would include the "leftest" of atheists as well as the "rightest" of Archbishop Runcie fans—I am attracted to sceptics of all kinds. So may I be allowed a word or two on the article by Ray Whitney (*Discussion*, April), about "sceptical Tories'" thinking about the SDP?

Like Mr Whitney, I tend to abhor the kind of "familiar territory of Gang-of-Four ambiguity" which (he may not have noticed) is not exactly absent in the writings of many Tories, "sceptical" and otherwise. But let me stick with the SDP whose real originator (I think), Mr Roy Jenkins MP, has just demonstrated that whether he is devious and duplicitous or ambiguous, etc. or not, he has something which Mr Michael Foot and Mrs Margaret Thatcher would dearly like to get their hands on because it demonstrably is something which can pull the votes away from Labour, Tories, and Scottish Nationalists alike.

Now, my own theory about this vote-pulling power involves me in emphasising the all-importance of this word "Social" in the SDP nomenclature which Mr Whitney confesses that he has not quite grasped.

You don't have any recollection of this in Mr Ray Whitney's article? Then let me particularise:

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Haseler: "We would not have included the word 'Social' in our party name merely by some accident of contemporary political nomenclature. . . ."
Whitney: "What does he mean? I know of no contemporary politician who does not wish to see changes in our society, and Mr Haseler offers nothing unique or special."

Come, come! Mr Whitney—the SDP's originator pulled the votes in Hillhead, remember, and even although you may not be able to understand this phenomenon—many *voters* seem to be able to see it and this is why you must bend your mind more closely to the task of realising that Dr Haseler's distinction between the two words "SOCIAL" and "SOCIALIST" is absolutely critical to the understanding of that special something that Mr Jenkins has discovered and applied to the British social scene; and which many of the intelligent people in Hillhead readily appreciated and endorsed with the greatest political accolade of all—their votes!

True understanding of the fact that the SDP is a Social Party but *not* a Social*ist* Party derives from being able to recognise that the basic terms of the Limehouse Declaration really set this out very clearly to all political thinkers who are meticulous with their choice and use of words. This basic fact, that the word *Social* has this all-embracing inclusiveness, is the thing which "breaks the mould" of class-war politics and establishes the SDP (Jenkins theory style) as a very significant and precious political innovation.

So let me put the matter as clearly as possible by using the simplest of statements.

The SDP is a *Social*-theory party, i.e. it is an essay in statesmanship as distinct from the kind of faction-serving "Trades Union Party" which Mr Tony Benn suggests as the proper function of the British Labour Party, or the faction-serving "Business & Executives Party" which the British Tory Party is always in danger of becoming.

Again, Socialists are allowed to become members of the SDP just as Capitalists are allowed—provided all concerned have grasped the essential fact that *Social* does *not* mean Socialist and it does not mean Capitalist.

Now to "Class." My brush with Mrs Williams in Dundee has made me suspicious that for her the "Classless" society principle may not be as radical as the anti-aristocracy and anti-monarchism of some of the people she left behind in the Labour Party. But if the word "social" is sincerely adhered to in the SDP this new party may well democratise not merely Britain but, in due time, Europe and, ultimately, the whole world.

EDWARD GRAHAM MACFARLANE

Dundee

Nostalgia

IN "What is Living (& What is Dead) in the Social-Democratic Idea?" (ENCOUNTER, February), Leszek Kolakowski concludes with five rules to which social democrats subscribe: commitment to democracy; to a welfare state; to equal opportunity; and to the cause of "underdogs", as well as opposition to totalitarian solutions. I find myself able to subscribe to them—without in any way having defined myself as a "social democrat" for more than a quarter-of-a-century. On the contrary, I believe that a pluralistic decentralised private market economy offers better promise of realising Professor Kolakowski's ideals than would a centralised state bureaucratised economy.

The nostalgia for the never-realised, and indeed, unrealisable, social democratic society continues to prevent too many intelligent democrats from recognising that utilisation of the Market often can provide better solutions to societal problems than Government Ownership or regulation. There is an important role for public policy in attempting to solve socio-economic problems; but we should attempt to limit it to those things that the Market cannot handle adequately. Government programmes should attempt to use Market mechanisms in order to minimise distortion of resource allocation and growth of centralised bureaucratic decision-making.

ROY B. HELFGOTT

New Jersey Institute of Technology
Newark, New Jersey

Nuclear Weapons

MICHAEL HOWARD'S conclusion, which follows from his careful analysis in "The Causes of War" (ENCOUNTER, March 1982), that "the abolition of nuclear weapons, even if it were possible, would be an unmixed blessing", is a powerful argument against the CND's position.

I would like to strengthen the anti-CND case by pushing the argument a stage further.

Supposing that all nuclear weapons had been destroyed by all the nations. We then must ask whether war has become more or less likely. Accepting Michael Howard's conclusion that war has become more likely: as soon as a war with conventional weapons breaks out, the side to manufacture a nuclear capability first will win. Thus, in this case, the abolition of nuclear weapons increases the chance, not just of war but of *nuclear* war.

Even if the chances of war following abolition of nuclear weapons have neither been increased or decreased this argument still tends towards a rational policy of keeping nuclear weapons.

In order for the CND case to persuade, they must show that abolition would reduce the chances of war.

ALEX SHAND

Chorlton-cum-Hardy

"McCarthyite"?

IN HIS ARTICLE on Scandinavia (in the February 1982 issue of ENCOUNTER), David Gress mentioned the willingness of the Scandinavian Left to call its opponents "McCarthyites." It may interest the readers of ENCOUNTER to know that as a result of his article, the newspaper *Politiken* has now denounced Gress as a—oh well, you guessed it.

STIG OLSEN

Århus
Denmark

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Life & Letters Today

Canberra

MUMBO: **When his wife became Prime Minister, Denis Thatcher was asked to submit for official approval any speeches he might be thinking of making.**

"I did my best", he said in Canberra yesterday. "I prepared a draft. It was very polished—quotations from Shakespeare and Livy in the original.

"They studied it, then they gave their verdict: 'This is all mumbo-jumbo. Please confine your remarks to plain mumbo'."

DAILY MAIL

Melbourne

FASHIONABLE WORD: *Mrs Margaret Thatcher, the Prime Minister, who is in Melbourne, made last-minute additions to a lecture in answer to Mr Heath's talk of consensus—a "fashionable word."*

"When I asked one of my Commonwealth colleagues why he kept saying there was a consensus on a certain matter, another replied in a flash: 'Consensus is the word you use when you cannot get agreement.'

"For me, consensus seems to be the process of abandoning all beliefs, principles, values and policies. So it is something in which no one believes and to which no one objects. It is the process of avoiding the very issues that have to be solved merely to get people to come to an agreement on the way ahead.

"What great causes have been fought and won under the banner of 'I stand for consensus'?"

THE TIMES

Frankfurt-am-Main

NARCISSUS AS NAZI: *Words are taking on odd and freakish forms. Consider that strange new word in German called "Narzismus." We begin to find it everywhere. Even when there is a translation from the English—as from Christopher Lasch's book, "The Age of Narcissism"—one notes the use of "narzistisch" and "Narzist", although in the original there are the proper variations of* Narcissus, *and not of* "Narz"*! Could it be that in our German ears the sound of the old jargon—"Nazi ... Nazismus ... nazistisch"—has become so fixed that somehow "Narzissmus" simply sounds "right"?*

FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG

Los Angeles

BLEEP WARS: *A popular item for executives is the wristwatch calculator, which, in addition to telling time, enables one to compute everything from the Gross National Product to the week's grocery bill.*

"Game-Time" combines a digital watch, four electronic games complete with sound effects and an electronic scorer in a wrist-worn unit not much larger than a standard digital watch.

A special feature for executives is a button that can silence the electronic bleeps and booms so that no one will know what the boss is really doing.

LOS ANGELES TIMES

London

ONLY DISCONNECT: *Gore Vidal describes how E. M. Forster met Tennessee Williams in London [Anthony Powell writes]. Forster invited both of them to luncheon, but (according to Vidal) Tennessee Williams at first refused for various reasons; and in any case he thought Forster was the author of "Captain Horatio Hornblower."*

DAILY TELEGRAPH

Cambridge

LOGOPHILIA: *The Cambridge journal Logophile has now published its piece, based on our correspondence [Godfrey Smith writes] revealing the 10 most beautiful words of the famous. Bernard Levin, sticking to the rule that meanings don't count, offers*

"pellucid, aquiline, lily, silken, brandy, paragon, alembic, ocean, notary and perish."

(But, as Logophile notes, was there no residual warm glow from the brandy?)

My favourite cartoonist Posy Simmonds chose

"spume, vanilla, dingle, hellebore, dusk, murmur, heirloom, treacle, chocolate and flummery."

Jilly Cooper had an impressively far-out list:

"mandragora, valerian, polysyllable, hesperides, cellar-door, Lysander, paragon, adamantine, twilight and memory."

William Rees-Mogg said the choice must be arbitrary, and to prove his point chose

"curfew, tolls, knell, lowing, herd, winds, ploughman, homeward, leaves and darkness."

Barbara Cartland, asked for 10, supplied 12:

"love, God, divine, pure, innocent, ecstacy [sic], rapture, moonlight, shimmering, radience [sic], magical and mysterious."

My favourite list in this lot, however, has to be Lady Antonia Fraser's:

"green, perilous, jonquil, midnight, fountain, translucent, violin, garland, dew and mistress."

SUNDAY TIMES

London

EUPHEMISM: **Can we stop using "Hit Man" when what we mean is Hired Murderer? "Hit man" is a euphemism used by professional criminals to disguise the peculiar horror of the act it refers to [Ferdinand Mount writes].**

"Hit"—fatally attractive to headline writers because of having only three letters—has a sporting connotation; squeezing the trigger is seen as an emotionless activity like playing Space Invaders.

This slipshod practice has crept into newspapers from thrillers like "The Day of The Jackal"—one more stage in the process of turning real life into pulp fiction.

THE STANDARD

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"A triumphant validation of 'oral history.' At last we know what really happened at Casas Viejas despite all the nonsense that was written about it at the time and subsequently... a highly readable book. I was fascinated and moved by it."
—JULIAN PITT-RIVERS

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Illustrations include many striking photographs by the author

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